Review of the Syllabuses for the Senior Phase of Learning

Consultation Paper

October 2005

Queensland Government

QSA Queensland Studies Authority
Partnership and innovation

Foreword

As part of its review of the syllabuses for the Senior Phase of Learning, the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) has initiated a public debate on what young people need to know and be able to do at the end of 12 years of schooling.

The review presents the QSA's senior syllabuses for public scrutiny and asks the education community and the broader community for their comments.

This debate occurs on the eve of major changes to state education. New legislation will require young people to participate in education and/or training beyond Year 10. The new Queensland Certificate of Education will recognise a broader range of learning and will raise standards. So the debate on senior syllabuses is integral to ongoing reform, and is vital to the progress of education in Queensland.

From this debate we will be able to develop syllabuses that take full account of what students need today and in the future; to provide learning that prepares students for future pathways to university, vocational education and employment; to guide schools on creating curriculum that meets the learning needs of all Queensland students.

I invite you to participate in this important debate.

Professor John Dewar
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Griffith University

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About this paper

This consultation paper is about the review of the syllabuses for the Senior Phase of Learning.

The decision to review the Queensland Studies Authority[1] (QSA) syllabuses for the Senior Phase of Learning was foreshadowed in the suite of reforms, Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF). These reforms are designed to encourage more young Queenslanders to complete school successfully and move on to rewarding post-school pathways.

The QSA is reviewing its syllabuses to ensure they:
- meet the needs of young people today and in the future
- are flexible enough to be delivered over various times and at various locations
- meet the expectations of the community, employers, universities and training providers.

This review requires all stakeholders to work together to develop learning for the Senior Phase of Learning that meets the needs of all students, the community, employers, further education and training providers and universities.

How to make your voice heard

The QSA wants to hear your views on the issues raised in this paper. Make sure your views are heard by:
- sending a personal response using the questions at the back of this paper as a guide
- joining in one of the forums being arranged in schools and communities
- contributing to a response from a school, group or association
- responding online.

Forums will take place across Queensland from 18 October to 2 December 2005. For details of a meeting or forum in your area, see the QSA website at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/consultations.

Make sure your response:
- includes your name, a brief description of the capacity in which you write (e.g. as a teacher, parent, small-business owner, association representative, student) and contact details so that we can reply to you if needed
- is organised around the questions raised in this paper and reprinted at the back.

Consultation is open till 14 February 2006.

Whom to call and where to write

If you have any questions about this review, please call Janice Chee on (07) 3864 0457 or Graeme Goodger on (07) 3864 0386.

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[1] The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) is a statutory body established under the *Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002*. The QSA develops, reviews and approves preschool guidelines and syllabuses for Years 1 to 12, and develops professional resources for teachers to implement guidelines and syllabuses. The QSA also looks after testing, assessment and moderation and certification of Queensland students, and establishes tertiary entrance procedures.

Email

Structure your response around the questions in this paper and listed at the back.

Address your email to syllabusreview@qsa.qld.edu.au and attach your response as a Microsoft Word document.

Internet

Fill in the feedback form on the QSA website, www.qsa.qld.edu.au/consultations.

Mail and fax

Structure your responses around the questions in this paper and listed at the back.

Send written responses to:

The Review of Syllabuses Project
Queensland Studies Authority
PO Box 307
Spring Hill Qld 4004

or fax responses to (07) 3221 2553.

Part 1: The context

The Queensland Government has set the goal of increasing the number of young people completing Year 12, or its equivalent, from 68 per cent to 88 per cent by the year 2010. To achieve this goal, and as part of its Queensland State Education (QSE) 2010 vision, the government introduced new legislation and a new school qualification to ensure students enjoy a seamless transition through the phases of schooling.

New legislation

New legislation, effective from 2006, will require all young people to complete Year 10 and then participate in education or training for a further two years. The new laws:

- make it compulsory for young people to stay at school until they finish Year 10 or until they turn 16, whichever comes first
- require young people to then participate in education and training for:
  - a further two years, or
  - until they have gained a Queensland Certificate of Education, or
  - until they have gained a Certificate III vocational qualification, or
  - until they have turned 17.

The new laws exempt young people who enter full-time work after completing Year 10 or turning 16.

All young people will be required to be registered with the QSA during Year 10 and before they turn 16 and open a Learning Account. This will mark the beginning of the Senior Phase of Learning.

The 'learning or earning' legislation will lead to growth in the number and diversity of students staying at school. These young people will enter the senior phase with a wide range of capabilities and with different aspirations for their post-school pathways. They have every right to expect that the syllabuses that are used to design learning programs for them are the very best available.

Queensland Certificate of Education

The Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) is a new qualification that will commence with Year 10s in 2006.

Throughout the Senior Phase of Learning students will bank their achievements in their Learning Account. At the end of Year 12, all students enrolled at school will receive a Senior Statement that will list all their learning achievements. Students who have fulfilled the requirements will be awarded the QCE.

The QCE recognises the diversity of young people and their great variety of aspirations. It is also an achievement-based qualification — it sets higher standards by requiring students to achieve a significant amount of learning to a set standard, and it requires students to achieve a set standard in literacy and numeracy.

The new qualification also introduces new flexibilities:

- more learning options

- more places where learning can occur
- more time to complete the Senior Phase of Learning.

These flexibilities are important to engage more young people in learning, and so that:
- young people can tailor a learning program to meet their skills, needs and ambitions
- schools can select learning materials and offer programs that meet the diverse learning needs of their students
- new courses of study can be developed that forge stronger links with VET and employment, and that complement the pathway to university.

While it is expected that young people will take up the opportunity for greater flexibility in what and where they study, it is likely that most young people will continue to complete their Senior Phase of Learning at school using the syllabuses provided by the QSA.

The QCE reflects how learning is currently organised but also has the capacity to reflect a more diverse, innovative and creative learning environment. Therefore, this syllabus review will look at:
- learning options to achieve a greater range of skills and knowledge
- flexible learning options that recognise different combinations of learning.

National debate — consistency and standards

The syllabus review must also be seen in the context of the current national debate about consistency in curriculum and standards.

The review of syllabuses is occurring in an environment of intense critique of what and how students learn in schools. There have been numerous criticisms in recent years about falling standards and the lack of consistency, both across schools in Queensland and between Australian states and territories.

Queensland schools need the best learning products that meet the needs of all their students. And the Queensland community should have confidence in the quality and relevance of those products.

These are the goals of this review — to produce the best syllabuses possible that meet student's needs and that the community has confidence in. To achieve these goals, the syllabus review will take up many of the issues from the debate on curriculum and standards, and will ensure that future syllabus development takes account of what is occurring across Australia.

Changes in the labour market

This review is set against new labour market demands. Due partly to Australia's role in a knowledge economy, our labour market has changed substantially. The nature of work, the generic skills that are now required in many areas of employment, the industries in which employment is growing and what constitutes a job have all evolved in recent years.

Changes in post-school institutions

The review is also set against changes to the way post-school institutions structure the courses that they offer.

Universities are redefining traditional disciplines. They are developing new areas of knowledge, putting greater significance on some areas of knowledge and combining traditional areas with new ways.

We know students now have many ways of entering university. While becoming OP-eligible remains the most prominent way to get a university place, many universities are using other selection methods to supplement the OP. Students are increasingly using VET as a way of getting into university. The Green Paper *Skills for Jobs and Growth* shows that students are choosing higher-level VET training as a higher education pathway.

This review takes account of these changes.

QSA syllabuses

The QSA provides products and services that schools value and that create pathways for all students to undertake further study at university or in vocational education and training or to move to employment.

However, in the future, schools will be able to choose from a wider range of learning products than those developed by the QSA.

QSA's syllabuses currently provide a clear pathway for students from school to university. The QSA will continue to provide this pathway through a thorough and comprehensive process that meets the requirements of universities. Whether this pathway remains in its current form, however, will be part of our discussions.

The extent to which the syllabuses provide a pathway to other post-school destinations is less clear and this review is an opportunity to discuss ways to build those pathways.

The review will preserve the best of the current system. These strengths include the rigour, quality assurance and the recognition of the knowledge and experience of our communities in developing and revising syllabuses. The question of what *is* the best of the current system is central to the debate.

It is timely for the QSA to review its suite of syllabuses for the Senior Phase of Learning to make sure the syllabuses are future focused, allow schools to provide a relevant, innovative and creative curriculum for Queensland's young people and meet the needs of all students.

Any change to syllabuses has to be about maximising opportunities for young people. The questions posed in this review are essentially about the extent of this change.

Part 2: Reviewing the syllabuses for the Senior Phase of Learning

Purpose of the review

The purpose of this review is to assess the scope, range and relevance of the QSA Years 11 and 12 syllabuses and to recommend future directions for:

- the form syllabuses might take
- decisions about the way the QSA either develops or accredits syllabuses within the context of the broader education and training reforms in Queensland.

The review will examine Authority and Authority-registered syllabuses to ensure they:

- meet the needs of young people today and in the future
- provide options so that assessment and achievement can occur over various times and in various locations
- meet the expectations of the community, employers, universities and training providers.

Issues for consultation

In Part 3 of this paper we discuss the following five issues:

- valued knowledge and skills
- the structure of QSA syllabuses and syllabus design
- pathways and the suite of syllabuses
- Year 10
- ongoing review.

Process for the review

- We will conclude consultation on 14 February 2006.
- After February we will release an options paper that will propose the future direction of senior syllabuses. From March to May 2006 we will seek feedback on the options set out in that paper.
- In June 2006 the QSA Governing Body will consider final proposals on the direction of senior syllabuses.
- In parallel with the consultations, two independent research reports are being undertaken to provide background and insight into some of the topics covered by the consultations. These papers will be submitted by December 2005. The research reports include:
  - an analysis of the current syllabuses, and the impact of syllabuses on post-school pathways
  - approaches to syllabus design.

Part 3: Consultation issues

Part 3 of the consultation paper details five issues for discussion.

Each issue is dealt with in three sections:

1. a brief exploration of the issue

2. questions to stimulate discussion

3. examples of possible strategies that draw on recent experience, research and practice, including:
    – *QSE–2010* and schools' efforts to differentiate curriculum and practices to meet the needs of local communities
    – New Basics and outcomes-based education developing greater collaboration between schools and the community to develop innovative curriculum options for young people
    – the Pitman Report, *The Senior Certificate: A New Deal*, which reconceptualised the Senior Phase of Learning to include all young people
    – the Gardner Report, *The Review of Pathways Articulation*, which provided guidelines on developing pathways from school to further education and training, employment and university
    – ETRF (Education and Training Reforms for the Future) initiatives, which provide a range of learning opportunities for all young people
    – the *Joint Ministerial Statement on Future Directions for Vocational Education and Training in Queensland Schools* (2004), which made a commitment to develop clear pathways to tertiary study that better recognise VET in schools, and which also announced the move from having VET embedded in Authority-registered subjects, to offering VET certificates as stand-alone qualifications
    – the recently released Green Paper, *Skills for Jobs and Growth*, which proposes wide-ranging changes to the VET sector, including a focus on VET qualifications at certificate III level and above

    and most importantly:
    – the innovative work undertaken by schools as they design programs for young people.

The examples are linked to the questions and we invite you to respond to both the questions and the examples. Your responses will guide the QSA in the development of options and ensure the needs and expectations of the community are met.

A feedback sheet is at the end of this paper to assist you in responding to the syllabus review. The feedback sheet is also available on the QSA's website at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/consultations. Also see page 1 for other ways to let us know your views.

Issue 1: Valued knowledge and skills

What all young people should know and be able to do at the end of 12 years of schooling is a difficult and sometimes controversial topic. It covers questions such as 'What is worth knowing?', 'What skills are necessary for successful transition to post-school destinations?' 'What attributes should students develop at school?' — all questions worth asking and discussing, as they go to the heart of how learning, undertaken in schools, is organised.

A broad general education

One of the main goals of schooling is to develop young people who are well rounded and prepared for life. QSA's Years 1 to 10 syllabuses share this goal — they emphasise the attributes of the lifelong learner:

- a knowledgeable person with deep understanding
- a complex thinker
- a creative person
- an active investigator
- an effective communicator
- a participant in an interdependent world
- a reflective and self-directed learner.

As students move to the Senior Phase of Learning the sorts of programs that they undertake need to further develop these attributes.

Preparation for post-school destinations

The senior phase needs to provide a rich environment for developing social maturity as well as for preparing students for making life choices. It is a time when young people get ready to move onto work, training or university. A goal of schooling in the Senior Phase of Learning must be to support young people to move smoothly and confidently to this next phase.

University

Post-school institutions have changed and are continuing to change the way they offer and structure courses. Traditional disciplines are being redefined, new areas of knowledge are emerging, some areas of knowledge are being given greater significance, and traditional areas are being combined in new ways.

The way higher education courses are delivered is also changing. In regional universities students routinely attend lectures via computer link-ups. Many courses allow students to access their material via the internet at a time and place that suits them. In this environment, students need to be confident in their ability to learn independently and to use the new technologies to access their learning materials.

The pathways to university have become more diverse. Some students are using study in VET as a way into university, while some universities have developed programs that allow students to bypass the OP. In new and emerging areas of knowledge, universities are using other selection methods to supplement the OP.

VET (vocational education and training)

The VET sector is also undergoing change. The focus is shifting to the development of new middle and high-level VET courses for the associate-professional and technician workforces.

Another important development is the establishment of the Australian Technical Colleges. These colleges will have a curriculum that combines academic study and vocational training.

With the introduction of integrated degree and diploma courses, the boundaries between VET and universities have blurred. These programs blend theoretical and applied knowledge and skills to give students the edge in the labour market.

The QCE provides schools with the flexibility to build programs of study that combine VET courses with academic study and that prepare young people for entry to high-level VET programs.

Employment

In Queensland most employment growth has occurred in areas requiring the highest skill levels — professional, associate-professional and trade employment. Predicting which specific types of work will be in highest demand — even one or two years into the future — is fraught with difficulty. However, what is clear is that this dynamic labour market demands more than job-specific skills — workers also need a range of employability skills such as:

- literacy and numeracy
- information literacy, including ICT (information and communication technology)
- self-management
- problem solving
- planning and organising
- capacity to learn independently
- communication
- team work
- initiative and enterprise.[2]

Some questions

- What are the skills and attributes that young people need to engage with their communities and to participate as active citizens?

- Are there some things all subjects should include? What are they?

- Do different post-school pathways have different requirements? If so, what do young people need to know and be able to do to move successfully from school:
  - to work?
  - to university?
  - to vocational education and training?

- How can the knowledge and skills that young people need be included in syllabuses?

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[2] These employability and lifelong learning skills were identified by research undertaken on behalf of the QSA by The Allen Consulting Group (2004).

Some examples of what we could do

Example 1: Key skills and knowledge

- Identify generic skills that help prepare students for further study, the workplace, and that help students participate as citizens, and include these generic skills in the general objectives[3] of all syllabuses.
- Review the recommendation of the Pitman Report (*The Senior Certificate: A New Deal* (2002)) regarding experiential learning. This recommendation described areas of learning that young people had identified as missing from their schooling but which they regarded as very important. These were personal growth and development, personal career management and management of personal finances.
- Include vocational learning in all syllabuses.
- Include in all syllabuses *entrepreneurship*, broadly defined as the ability to take initiative and create new ways of doing business.

Example 2: Build a P to 12 approach to syllabuses

- Include the attributes of the lifelong learner currently in the Years 1 to 10 syllabuses in the Years 11 and 12 syllabuses.

Example 3: Independent learning

- Build in more independent and semi-independent study opportunities to encourage students to take greater ownership of their own learning. By suggesting activities where students can work with greater independence under general guidance and support of a teacher, the syllabuses could place greater emphasis on self-management and learning how to learn. As is done in many university courses the internet could be used as a place where learning materials are posted so that students can access learning materials at a time and place of their own choosing.

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[3] General objectives are usually organised under the headings: *process*, *content*, *skill* and *affective objectives.*
These objectives are intended to be pursued directly by the school and to be included in student achievement.

Issue 2: Structure of QSA syllabuses and syllabus design

From 2006 the 'learning and earning' legislation will require young people to participate in education and/or training for two years beyond Year 10. As a result, senior schooling must provide learning for a larger and more diverse group of young people.

Currently the QSA provides schools with a range of syllabuses and curriculum materials for students in Years 11 and 12, including:

- Authority syllabuses
- study area specifications (the basis of Authority-registered subjects)
- extensions syllabuses
- syllabuses that lead to an external examination.

These are listed in Appendix 1.

QSA syllabuses provide advice about the scope of learning or subject area, and any mandatory components for learning, assessment, standards and quality assurance required for reporting or certification. Syllabuses include common elements such as:

- description of the learning or subject area
- statements of essential learning
- statements of standards
- assessment strategies and tools
- quality-assurance requirements for teacher judgments
- state or Commonwealth government requirements.

Generally, the syllabuses provide for courses that are:

- four-semester developmental courses
- based on 220 hours taken over two years
- usually arranged as 55 hours of school time per semester.

The syllabuses provide the basis for schools to decide on the curriculum they offer.

Authority syllabuses

Authority subjects are developed from QSA syllabuses. Schools interpret the syllabus and develop a work program.

The QSA has 52 syllabuses and is currently developing another three. Four syllabuses have embedded VET certificates, meaning students can also complete VET certificates while studying the subject. Authority subjects contribute to the calculation of OPs and FPs (Field Positions). The structure of syllabuses for Authority subjects is described in Appendix 2.

The role of Authority subjects is clear: they are designed for students aspiring to tertiary entrance. Authority subjects undergo a rigorous moderation process and enjoy high status and standing in the educational community. However, it may be appropriate to review the degree of difficulty or complexity of learning in the various subjects and develop guidelines that make this more consistent across all subjects.

Study area specifications (the basis of Authority-registered subjects)

Study area specifications (SASs) provide frameworks from which Authority-registered subjects are developed. Schools interpret the SAS and develop a study plan.

There are 16 SASs. Before 2004, Authority-registered subjects included an opportunity for students to complete a range of VET competencies. In 2004, it was decided to no longer embed

VET competencies in Authority-registered subjects. Instead VET is to be delivered as stand-alone qualifications. So the SASs were redesigned to offer three different approaches[4]:

- Approach A, providing for stand-alone VET certificate levels I and II
- Approach B, containing vocational learning with no VET qualifications
- Approach C, including two semesters of vocational learning and a stand-alone VET certificate level I.

The shift away from embedding VET in Authority-registered subjects calls into question the purpose, relevance and adequacy of the SASs. The role of Authority-registered subjects is not clear.

These subjects do not enjoy the same status as Authority subjects. They are not subject to the same rigorous moderation process, although this is being strengthened with the introduction of the QCE.

Stand-alone VET qualifications do not need to be incorporated into a subject as students can enrol directly into a VET course.

Further, the current SASs tend to be based on VET qualifications at levels I and II and in areas traditionally available to young people at school. While certificates I and II have status as pathways to work and to higher VET qualifications, ETRF initiatives and the QCE encourage young people to consider the whole range of VET qualifications, especially courses at certificate III level. Having the qualifications linked to subjects may be sending a confusing message to young people and their parents that only qualifications offered in SASs are available for VET programs at school.

New initiatives being considered by the Department of Employment and Training identify new and emerging industries requiring high-level technical skills. These industries are opening up different sorts of opportunities for linking school programs to VET.

The role of Approach B, designed as vocational learning, needs to be reconsidered to ensure that students completing these subjects have access to further education and training. Now is the time to look again at these subjects to see if the applied learning encouraged in these subjects can complement academic study.

We also need to question the wisdom of offering two types of subjects — Authority and Authority-registered. All students need access to subjects which recognise and accommodate their individual skills and capacities. At the same time, all students in the Senior Phase of Learning should have access to learning products that have recognised 'buying power' for post-school pathways.

Extension syllabuses

There are currently five extension syllabuses: English (Literature), Music (Performance), French, German and Indonesian. They are written as one-year courses for students in Year 12 and allow high-achieving students to deepen their learning through more demanding activities in that subject.

Syllabuses that lead to an external examination

There are 15 syllabuses for external examinations. Generally these provide for one-year courses of study aimed at adults returning to study.

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[4] Not all SASs offer three approaches. English Communication, Pre-vocational Mathematics, Religion and Ethics, Childcare Studies, Marine and Aquatic Studies, Social and Community Studies offer Approach B only.

The flexibility offered by the QCE

The introduction of the QCE has strengthened the idea of building a senior program of study that includes both depth and breadth of learning. While the flexibility to structure a senior curriculum in terms of core and electives has always been available[5], in the main, students have tended not to take up this flexibility.

The QCE offers new opportunities for deepening and broadening learning while keeping students' options open.

• The QCE allows a broad range of learning to contribute. This means that young people's learning achievements can come from a wide range of learning experiences.

• The QCE's credit system means that learning involving different amounts of time and learning organised or delivered in different ways can contribute to the QCE. There is the potential for the development of learning achievements of different mixes and 'size'.

• The QSA's accreditation function means that schools can develop courses that meet local needs and these courses can contribute different amounts of credit to the QCE.

Given the introduction of the QCE, we need to consider the way syllabuses are organised and how to balance:

• coverage of content, and depth of understanding

• varying levels of complexity and difficulty

• subject-specific information and general cross-disciplinary skills or habits of mind such as the abilities to:
  – think critically
  – solve problems
  – present a rationale for a choice
  – argue convincingly for a point of view or research an issue
  – synthesise a range of information
  – apply what is learned to real-world situations.

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[5] The rules for OP eligibility require students to complete a minimum 20 semester units including at least three subjects over four semesters from Authority subjects. However, these rules were not specifically introduced as a flexibility provision.

Some questions

- How should we be delivering knowledge to meet the learning needs of young people in the 21st century?
  - Should all syllabuses provide for two-year courses of study only or could courses of study vary in length?
  - Should all syllabuses provide for courses that are 220 hours long? Should the courses vary in length? How long should they be?
  - Should all syllabuses be organised in the same way, or do different sorts of learning lend themselves to different types of organisation? If syllabuses should be organised differently, how should they vary?
  - How should we deal differently with varying complexity or levels of difficulty? For example, do we need the three mathematics subjects, Mathematics A, B and C?
  - Should artificial barriers between related subject areas be broken down? How do we deal with duplication across subject areas?
  - Is the academic basis of most Authority subjects the best form of organisation, or is a trans-disciplinary approach a better way to organise learning?
- Is it best to have two types of subjects — Authority and Authority-registered subjects — of very different status in the Senior Phase of Learning?
- What are the practical implications of changes to the way we structure syllabuses?
  - What are the implications for schools? For example, how would changes affect timetabling and delivery methods?
  - How would the professional development of teachers need to change?
  - What are the considerations for initial teacher education?
  - Would tertiary entrance procedures need to change?
  - How would changes impact on assessment and moderation procedures?

Some examples of what we could do

To facilitate learning and develop more responsive syllabuses that offer opportunities for all students, consideration could be given to the following ways of organising knowledge and designing syllabuses. Many of the examples present models that emphasise a core of competencies that all students should cover, with flexible extensions into areas of individual preference.

Example 1: Extension courses

The QSA has five syllabuses which have an extension course. This model of extending a parent syllabus allows high-achieving Year 12 students to deepen their learning in that subject.[6] This model could be extended to include more subjects.

Alternatively, this model could be used differently to form a foundation course with a range of extension courses.

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[6] Current extension syllabuses include English (Literature), Music (Performance), French, German and Indonesian.

- The foundation syllabus would develop a broad understanding of the main concepts of a subject for all students.
- Extension syllabuses would allow students to specialise in an area of study and could allow students to combine school-based theoretical learning, applied workplace learning, or a combination of the two.

For example, the Creative Arts SAS could provide some foundation studies in a wide range of media, and the SAS and the Visual Arts syllabus could provide the bases for extension courses.

Extension syllabuses could also be tiered. This would involve two courses eligible for OP ranking:

- a core course for all students
- an advanced course with a more theoretical and complex approach.

Example 2: Cross-disciplinary approach

A cross-disciplinary approach could allow schools, working with the QSA, to design a syllabus using new combinations of semester units or topics from related syllabuses. This approach could also include relevant VET competencies and university subjects undertaken while still at school.

For example, relevant sections from the current syllabuses for Physics, Graphics, Engineering Technology and Mathematics B and C could be combined to meet the needs of a specific area of study or a specific group. This course would be OP-eligible and include an amount of learning that satisfies the requirements of the QCE. It could also lead to an associate-professional qualification in engineering at TAFE, which could then lead to university programs.

Another example might be taking a film-making unit from the Film, Television and New Media syllabus, a web-page-construction unit from the Information Technology Systems syllabus, a composing unit from Music and a script-writing unit from Drama. This sort of combination encourages students to draw on various modes of thinking in interesting and challenging ways while at the same time taking on rigorous and worthwhile learning experiences.

Further, this approach could be used to develop a course in English as a second language that provides an alternate high-status English course for international students and migrant students.

Example 3: Short courses

A Short Course in the Australian Constitution, although no longer available, was a semester-length short course. The QSA also has syllabuses that provide for one-year courses — the extension syllabuses and the syllabuses for the Senior External Examinations.

Short courses have the potential to re-engage young people in learning by offering them short-term goals. Short courses would give students more opportunities to change their learning journey through Years 11 and 12. The courses could even be designed to be cumulative so that they add up to a substantial amount of learning in a specific area of study.

Short courses could also cover areas of student interest, such as financial management. For schools, short courses might offer the potential to innovate in a relatively short time.

Under the QCE young people could gain up to eight credits from short courses of study.

Example 4: Modularisation

Syllabuses could be divided into modules so that courses of study can freely draw on different syllabuses. Modules could also free students to condense their program or spread a course over a longer period of time.

Example 5: Threaded approach

The QSA currently develops syllabuses around discrete areas of learning. Using a threaded approach would make explicit connections between and within subjects so that students are made aware of the links. The threads could link content or link skills.

For example, in an area of study such as science where there are several syllabuses, the key principles that encourage the development of a scientific way of thinking could be made explicit and be described in the same way in all the syllabuses.

The threaded approach could also be a way to weave new sorts of learning — creative design, for example — into relevant syllabuses.

Issue 3: Pathways and the suite of syllabuses

Research shows that young people who complete 12 years of schooling or its equivalent (a certificate III vocational qualification) are better equipped to make their way in the world.

Over the last 20 years, more young people have been staying at school after the compulsory years.

- In 1982 just under 40 per cent of Queensland's 17-year-olds completed 12 years of schooling. Ninety-seven per cent of students awarded a Senior Certificate sought a place at university. Senior schooling was largely preparation and selection for university.
- By 2002, the proportion of 17-year-olds completing Year 12 had risen dramatically to 75 per cent.[7] However, only 70 per cent chose to be eligible for tertiary entrance. And 12 per cent of these students did not apply through QTAC for a place at university. Thirty per cent of all Year 12 students chose not to receive an OP and be eligible for university.

These figures suggest that senior schooling is now catering to the learning needs of a larger and more diverse group of young people with different aspirations, and many students are not pursuing a place at university.

This trend is also shown in the *Next Step Report 2005* which documents the results of the first statewide survey of the destinations of students completing Year 12 with a Senior Certificate or Certificate of Post-Compulsory School Education[8]. The report is based on the destinations of the students who were in Year 12 in 2004 and found that:

- about two-thirds of the school leavers continued with some form of education and training in the year after they left school
- almost the same number of students chose to study for VET qualifications as university degrees
- the majority of campus-based VET students were studying certificate level IV or higher
- almost one in six school leavers were undertaking either an apprenticeship or traineeship.

The report also showed that over 12 per cent of OP-ineligible students and students who had not undertaken any VET were the most vulnerable with an unemployment rate of over 12 per cent, that is, almost three times the average for the entire sample.

The students who are working are mainly in casual and part-time positions and working from 8 to 24 hours per week with only a small proportion working full-time hours. Almost half of all school leavers in Queensland are working as either sales assistants or food handlers. These are the occupational groups with a preponderance of part-time workers and where wages and skill requirements are low.

A goal of the Senior Phase of Learning is to help young people assess their post-school options. It is critical that they have access to information about courses of study, careers and employment. To achieve this, the QSA has created the online Careers Information Service to make it easier for young people to access this information. The information service comprises:

- a free-call service
- a website that provides students, teachers and parents with accurate, up-to-date and useful information

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[7] The trend to stay on at school beyond Year 10 has plateaued.

[8] The survey was completed by 23 650 young people, almost 60 per cent of all Year 12s in 2004. There was a small over-representation of students moving on to university, and under-representation of Indigenous and remote students, students with a language background other than English and international students. For more information on the survey, go to www.education.qld.gov.au/nextstep.

- links to online information about education and training in various regions, and links to national online career information
  - an individualised service linked to a young person's Learning Account so that they can use their own learning achievements, interests and goals to map out personalised career pathways based on up-to-date career information.

While senior schooling is, and will continue to be, used to select students for tertiary education, the range and scope of syllabuses must also cater to students seeking other post-school pathways, such as entry to the workforce or vocational education and training.

Some questions

- Are the subjects in the current suite the right ones, relevant to living and working in a knowledge economy? (See Appendix 1 for the full list of syllabuses.) What subjects should be included or not be included?

- Are there too many subjects? If so, which subjects should be deleted?

- Do the syllabuses currently available provide study options that cater to the diversity of students participating in learning beyond Year 10? How could this be improved?

- How can the QSA develop syllabuses that build pathways and that capitalise on the QCE?

Some examples of what we could do

In a context of change in higher education, vocational education and training and work it is important to consider if the syllabuses allow all young people to select study options that prepare them well for the life after school. The following initiatives could be strengthened or developed to achieve that goal.

Current initiatives that strengthen pathways

Example 1: School-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SATs)

SATs provide an excellent pathway to employment through the partnership between schools, trainers and employers. Young people gain valuable employability skills and job-specific skills while remaining connected to school and school-based learning.

Example 2: New approaches to syllabus design

The Aerospace Studies syllabus was developed specifically to meet the requirements of a growth industry in Queensland. It helps students understand the underlying concepts and principles of aviation and aerospace. The course combines many areas of learning, including mathematics, physics, English, information and communication technologies, business, engineering, history and law. It is designed to help students move on to tertiary entrance or high-level training in VET, and to follow one of the many career pathways in the industry.

Example 3: University study while still at school

Most universities offer high-achieving Year 12 students an opportunity to begin university courses. Students attend classes with university students and can use the university's library and other facilities. On successful completion of their course they receive an academic transcript. Depending on the degree program the students later enrol in, they may gain credit towards their tertiary studies. Some universities even guarantee students a place once they have completed

Year 12. These programs set up a partnership between the school, the university, and the student. Students undertaking these programs begin their transition to higher education and gain experience of university life.

New ways to strengthen pathways

Example 4: Add information to the syllabus documents

Syllabuses could include information from various career pathways so that students know what their studies can lead to. In this way, syllabuses would explicitly help students make connections between what they are learning and possible career pathways. To assist this, syllabuses could be mapped against the Australian Standard Classification of Education Definitions (ASCED) to ensure a broad range of career areas are covered by the syllabuses (see Appendix 4).

Example 5: Include a general objective linked to generic work-readiness skills

All syllabuses could include a general objective of building generic work-readiness skills. This objective could be developed by a panel of employers and reflect both current and emerging fields in employment. In this way, one purpose of a syllabus would be to help students prepare for employment.

Example 6: Tighten the connection between the syllabuses and VET

Authority subjects have served students moving to university well. The opportunity now exists to make more explicit links between the suite of syllabuses and vocational education and training. Consideration could be given to the development of applied courses that cover mathematical and scientific principles used for solving technological problems linked to work-based learning.

Strengthening the connection between school subjects and VET training may also help students move smoothly from school to high-level VET qualifications. Schools and VET providers could negotiate advanced-standing or in some cases, credit-transfer arrangements could be negotiated to encourage students to consider VET as a continuation of a desirable pathway rather than as a poor substitute for university study. This is not about job-specific training; it is about building the capabilities to be adaptive, flexible workers pursuing career pathways in a knowledge economy.

Building connections to VET could be done in the context of:
- the growth of employment in technician and associate professional fields at certificate IV level
- the establishment of the Australian Technical Colleges (ATC) to promote trade-level training combined with mathematics, English, science, information technology and civics. The ATCs are an impetus to create high-level applied courses that could be used by all schools to encourage young people to pursue certificate III trade qualification at school and also achieve a QCE.

Working with TAFE and other VET professionals, syllabus development could include a mapping exercise to identify specific knowledge and skills necessary for success in VET qualifications.

Example 7: Develop a specific career-education course

We could design a short course on personal and career management using the resources in the Career Information Service.

Issue 4: Year 10

Currently, senior schooling is taken to encompass Years 11 and 12, generally involving two consecutive years of full-time study at school. This sets Year 10 as an important juncture in young people's schooling life. The ETRF White paper stated that Year 10 should be treated as a transition to the Senior Phase of Learning.

This would occur by requiring schools to develop individual student plans for the Senior Phase of Learning – Senior Education and Training Plans – with young people and their parents or guardians. These plans will be developed and agreed to during Year 10.

New assessment and reporting for Year 9 will be introduced in Queensland. Also, the Australian Government is investigating national Year 9 testing of literacy and numeracy. The consequences of these changes could be that schools become clear about the purpose of Year 9 but are less clear about the purpose of Year 10. If the Year 9 reporting and testing is scheduled in the first half of the year, this could have implications for the latter part of Year 9 as well as Year 10.

Schools need to be guided on the purposes of Year 10 and their options for constructing programs that meet the needs of their students.

Many students find the transition from Year 10 to Year 11 one of the most difficult times of their school life. As students move into the Senior Phase of Learning, there is an increased expectation that they accept greater responsibility for their learning, take on leadership and participate in the community.

Some schools provide programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Year 10s. These programs have four purposes:
- *continuation* — so that some students can consolidate their studies before beginning their senior program
- *remediation* — to provide a 'catch-up' program for students who are struggling to meet Year 9 standards
- *acceleration* — for some students to begin the Senior Phase of Learning before Year 11. These programs are designed for two types of students:
  - gifted and talented students ready to begin higher-level studies
  - students who are losing interest in school and are taking part in re-engagement programs which may attract credit towards the QCE
- *specialisation* — allowing some students who have met Year 9 standards an opportunity to specialise in particular areas — for example, science, arts and sport — before beginning their senior program.

Year 10 is also an important time for planning for further schooling and vocational education and training.

Some questions

- What is the purpose of Year 10? Is it the beginning of the Senior Phase of Learning, the end of the Middle Phase of Learning or can it be both for different students?

- What learning experiences are relevant and valuable for Year 10 students?

- How can we strengthen the links between Year 10 and Year 11 to ensure a smooth transition to the Senior Phase of Learning?

Some examples of what we could do

The QSA could consider the following ideas to build stronger links between Year 10 and Years 11 and 12:

Example 1: Provide greater clarity about the outcomes for Year 10

The suite of Key Learning Area (KLA) syllabuses describes a program of learning for students in Years 1 to 10. Students should be given every opportunity to reach level 6 in each of the eight KLA syllabuses. Generally, the syllabuses attribute levels 5 and 6 across Years 8, 9 and 10. Implementation of KLA syllabuses since their inception in 1999 has been inconsistent, and hence it is difficult to gauge the preparedness of students to enter the Senior Phase of Learning.

Guidelines could be developed that assist schools to develop programs to match the four purposes identified for Year 10.

Example 2: Map the outcomes of KLA levels 5 and 6 to the senior syllabuses

It is necessary to ensure that there is an explicit connection between the Years 11 and 12 syllabuses and the KLA 1 to 10 syllabuses that facilitates smooth transition for students from Year 10 into the senior phase.

Guidelines could be prepared that outline the articulation from the KLA syllabuses to Years 11 and 12 in specific subject areas[9].

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[9] Guidelines for mathematics already exist describing the articulation from Years 1 to 10 and Mathematics B and C syllabuses.

Issue 5: Ongoing review

The QSA develops, approves and/or accredits syllabuses for preparatory school through to Year 12. The QSA currently produces a range of syllabuses (see Appendix 1):

- Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (Preparatory Year)
- Years 1 to 10 KLA syllabuses and support materials
- subject area syllabuses for levels 4 to 6 (Years 8 to 10)
- syllabuses for Years 11 and 12 (senior phase)
  - Authority subject syllabuses
  - Authority extension subject syllabuses
  - study area specifications (SASs) for Authority-registered subjects
  - subject syllabuses for the Senior External Examination.

An outcome of the review of syllabuses for the Senior Phase of Learning will be the development of principles to guide the future direction for developing senior syllabuses. New processes could include a uniform approach to how the QSA:

- reviews syllabuses to ensure their continuing relevance
- removes syllabuses from the suite of offerings
- evaluates requests to develop syllabuses
- includes programs designed by schools
- adds new areas of learning.

Current processes for reviewing the suite of syllabuses

The QSA has processes to evaluate and update Years 11 to 12 syllabuses.

- Syllabus advisory committees, schools, school systems, authorities and other institutions propose that a new syllabus be created or an existing syllabus be revised. The proposal is then evaluated by the QSA's P to 12 Curriculum Committee. Recently developed syllabuses have come from a variety of other sources:
  - The Ministerial Taskforce — Spotlight on Science initiated the Science21 syllabus
  - Education Queensland and industry organisations initiated Aerospace Studies
  - The ETRF reforms initiated the Tourism syllabus.

Developing a new syllabus

- The development of a new syllabus is overseen by a syllabus advisory committee. Members of syllabus advisory committees are drawn from practising secondary and tertiary educators, systems curriculum officers, parents and industry. All new syllabuses undergo extensive consultation and are independently evaluated.

It takes six years for a new syllabus to be trialled and evaluated.

Years 1 and 2	Trial phase (15–30 schools)
Year 3	Interim year: the trial syllabus is revised for the pilot phase
Years 4 and 5	Pilot phase (at least 25 schools)
Year 6	Interim year: the syllabus is revised for general implementation
Year 7	Schools can implement the syllabus

Revising a syllabus

- There is a six-year cycle for revising syllabuses. The QSA significantly revises syllabuses if the syllabuses need to include:
  - new subject matter
  - new assessment techniques and practices
  - new criteria and standards
  - new strategies and skills to teach the subject.

Once we significantly revise a syllabus, it takes three years for us to trial and evaluate it.

Years 1 and 2	Trial-pilot phase (25–50 schools)
Year 3	Interim year: the syllabus is prepared for general implementation
Years 4 to 5	A one or two-year phase-in period, depending on the number of schools offering the subject

The QCE

A key feature of the QCE is that it recognises a broad range of learning. All learning that meets the Quality Criteria[10] can contribute. Schools can develop their own courses of study to suit local needs, and other organisations can have their learning programs recognised. The QSA is currently reviewing accreditation functions to meet these new demands.

Some questions

- Developing new learning products
  - How do we develop syllabuses that provide students access to a wide variety of career pathways rather than a choice between academic preparation and vocational training?
  - Is the amount of time to introduce a new syllabus too long to reflect new knowledge, changes in employment areas and technology?
  - How do we make sure that we don't duplicate or have too many syllabuses?
- Reviewing the syllabuses
  - How do we know that QSA's syllabuses are serving the needs of students?
  - Should there be a common approach to reviewing the syllabuses? For example, do all syllabuses have to be reviewed in the same way? If not, how could they be reviewed?
  - How can we balance the need to review a syllabus quickly, with the need to maintain high standards and public confidence in QSA syllabuses?

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[10] The Quality Criteria ensure that learning achievements from courses contributing to the QCE are of sufficient size, standing and depth and help students move from school to the next phase of their lives.

Some examples of what we could do

To improve the processes for reviewing and developing Years 11 to 12 syllabuses we could consider the following.

Syllabus review process

Example 1: Investigate models for reviewing syllabuses

- How do other states review and update syllabuses? For example, the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) reviews its syllabuses every three years. SSABSA asks nominating agencies and schools to submit their views on amalgamating, deleting or adding subjects. The criteria for the reviews are identical to those used to consider requests from schools, institutions and other authorities for new syllabuses. Broadly these are:
  - increased participation
  - demand and support for the subject
  - overlap with existing subjects
  - resource impact on schools and SSABSA.
- How are VET training packages reviewed and updated?
- How do universities review and update their courses?
- Are there international examples that can guide refinement of the syllabuses?

Example 2: Different review periods

The QSA could review its syllabuses at different times depending on the rate of change in the different subject areas. For example, a history subject may not need to be revised as often as subjects covering information technology.

Example 3: Evidence-based review and development

We could create an evidence-based review process to determine the continuing relevance of a syllabus, make decisions to add or remove syllabuses and investigate the effects of syllabuses on student learning. The research could look at:

- students' choice of subjects to identify syllabuses that have little relevance
- economic analysis to gain insight into the general direction of the economy
- research on how students learn and what motivates them
- emerging or changing areas of knowledge.

Example 4: Reviewing complexity or difficulty

The QSA could consider introducing something like the Victorian Credit Matrix to provide direction on complexity in and across syllabuses. The Credit Matrix was formed by the Victorian Qualifications Authority. Among other things, it provides a common way of describing the complexity or relative challenge of learning in different qualifications. [11]

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[11] More information about the Credit Matrix can be found at www.vqa.vic.gov.au.

Process for creating new learning products

Example 5: Reduce the development cycle

Another option is to remove the pilot stage so that the syllabus development process is reduced to three years.

Example 6: Partnerships for innovation

To encourage innovation in syllabuses the QSA could work in partnership with schools to identify new and innovative courses.

Example 7: Continual innovation

Each syllabus could have an experimental element that explores a new area of learning or approach to learning. This could be optional and could be updated each year or every two years. In this way, schools could be made aware of new directions and adopt them if they have the resources to do so.

Appendix 1: Summary of P to 12 QSA syllabuses

Table1: QSA syllabus documents grouped according to QSA officer responsibilities (June 2005)

Years 1 to 10	Years 11 and 12			
	Authority	**Extension**	**Authority-registered (SAS)**	**External**
ENGLISH				
Yrs 1 to 10 English	English	English Extension (Literature)	English Communication Literacy (& Numeracy) (being redeveloped)	English
MATHEMATICS				
Yrs 1 to 10 Mathematics	Mathematics A Mathematics B Mathematics C		Pre-vocational Mathematics (Literacy &) Numeracy (being redeveloped)	Mathematics A Mathematics B
SCIENCE				
Yrs 1 to 10 Science	Biology Chemistry Physics Earth Science Multi-Strand Science Science21 (trial)			Biology Chemistry Physics
	Marine Studies		Marine & Aquatic Practices	
Levels 4–6 Agriculture Education	Agricultural Science		Agriculture & Horticulture	
ARTS				
Yrs 1 to 10 Arts	Visual Art		Creative Arts	Art
	Music	Music Extension (Performance)		
	Drama			Drama
	Film and Television Dance			

Years 1 to 10	Years 11 and 12			
	Authority	**Extension**	**Authority-registered (SAS)**	**External**
BUSINESS AND COMMERCE				
Levels 4–6 Business Education	Business Communication & Technologies[12] Economics Business Organisation & Management		Business	
			Retail	
	Accounting			Accounting
	Legal Studies			Legal Studies
	Tourism[13] (in development)		Tourism	
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES				
Yrs 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment	Study of Society Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies Futures			
Yrs 9 to 10 History	Ancient History Modern History			Ancient History Modern History
Yrs 9 to 10 Geography	Geography			Geography
Yrs 9 to 10 Civics	Political Studies			
	Philosophy & Reason (formerly Logic)			Philosophy & Reason
	Study of Religion		Religion & Ethics	
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION				
Yrs 1 to 10 Health & Physical Education	Health Education Physical Education		Recreation	
Levels 4–6 Home Economics Education	Home Economics			
			Social & Community Studies	
	Hospitality Studies[14]		Hospitality	

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[12] Includes BSB20101 Certificate II in Business

[13] Will include THT20502 Certificate II in Tourism Operations

[14] Includes either THH1102 Certificate I in Hospitality (Operations) or THH11102 Certificate I in Hospitality

Years 1 to 10	Years 11 and 12			
	Authority	**Extension**	**Authority-registered (SAS)**	**External**
TECHNOLOGIES				
Levels 4–6 Information Communication & Technology Education	Information Technology Systems[15] Information Processing & Technology		Information & Communications Technology	
	Graphics			
Years 1 to 10 Technology	Technology Studies			
Levels 4–6 Industrial Technology Education	Engineering Technology		Manufacturing	
	Aerospace Studies (in development)			
LANGUAGES				
Yrs 1 to 10 French	French	French Extension		
Yrs 1 to 10 German	German	German Extension		
Yrs 1 to 10 Indonesian	Indonesian	Indonesian Extension		
Yrs 1 to 10 Chinese	Chinese			Chinese
Yrs 1 to 10 Italian	Italian			
Yrs 1 to 10 Japanese	Japanese			
Yrs 1 to 10 Korean	Korean			
	Latin Modern Greek Russian Spanish Vietnamese Polish			
EARLY YEARS				
Early Years Curriculum Guidelines and support materials *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*			Early Childhood Practices	

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[15] Includes either ICA30199 Certificate III in Information Technology (Software Applications) or ICA30299 Certificate III in Information Technology (General) or ICA30399 Certificate III in Information Technology (Network Administration).

Appendix 2: Senior syllabus structure

Senior syllabuses for Authority subjects present broad guidelines for subjects but do not prescribe details.

Syllabuses have the following structure:

Rationale

The rationale justifies including the subject in the senior school curriculum by:
- defining the subject and stating its characteristics
- stating how these characteristics contribute to the education of students.

Global aims

Global aims are statements of the long-term achievements, attitudes and values that students should foster while studying the subject but which are not directly assessed by the school.

General objectives

General objectives are set out under the following headings (as suits the subject):
- **process objectives** (the cognitive skills students should acquire)
- **content objectives** (the factual knowledge students should gain)
- **skill objectives** (the practical skills students should learn)
- **affective objectives** (the attitudes, values and feelings the subject aims to develop; affective objectives are not assessed).

A syllabus may state general objectives in categories other than process, content, skill and affective objectives, provided that the syllabus has:
- a balance of practical skills, cognitive skills, factual knowledge and affective behaviour
- attitudes and values to be developed by students clearly stated in the global aims
- consistent categories of objectives showing the subject's characteristics identified in the rationale of the syllabus.

Organisation

The 'Organisation' section contains:
- the subject matter, units, topics, themes etc. around which the subject may be organised
- core requirements
- the minimum number of hours (55 hours per semester) of school time (including assessment) that a course of study should run for
- principles and ways of constructing work programs.

Learning experiences

Learning experiences are activities and/or tasks conducted that contribute to student development as outlined in the global aims and general objectives.

Assessment

The following components of assessment are stated in the syllabus:
- assessment techniques for judging student achievement
- summative assessment criteria and standards for each level of achievement
- ways of deriving levels of achievement
- requirements for verification folios.

Work program requirements

Work program requirements set the principles for and ways of constructing work programs that reflect all sections of the syllabus.

Syllabuses also include statements about:
- language education
- quantitative concepts and skills
- educational equity

Resource material

A list of resource material is also included in the syllabus. This is refined throughout the trial and pilot phases of the syllabus.

For those syllabuses that include VET components, advice about registration requirements is also included.

Extension subjects

Extension subjects cater for students with specific aptitudes and abilities. The QSA designs these syllabuses for extension subjects that:
- are studied in Year 12
- comprise two semester units of study
- are more challenging than their parent subjects
- have names which are derived from the names of their parent subjects.

Syllabuses for extension subjects have the same structure as normal syllabuses,. but their structure shows how they are derived from the parent subject and how they are more challenging. In particular, the standards used to assess student achievement in extension subjects are more exacting than those used in the parent subject.

Appendix 3: Study area specification (SAS) — Authority-registered subjects

Study area specifications provide frameworks for developing Authority-registered subjects.

The SAS framework includes:

Rationale

The rationale identifies the study area and justifies including the study area in the senior curriculum.

The rationale includes the political, industry and curriculum perspectives relevant to the study area, benefits to students and options for students through further study, training and/or employment.

When relevant, the VET qualification(s) that may be achieved should be stated.

Statement on educational equity

A statement on workplace health and safety needed for the study area

Sections

SASs are divided into sections that describe three different approaches:
- Section 1: APPROACH A: Stand-alone delivery of VET certificate(s)
- Section 2: APPROACH B: Vocational learning strands (no VET)
- Section 3: APPROACH C: Strand allowing for a VET outcome

Section 1: Approach A: Stand-alone VET certificate(s)

This section provides advice on the training packages at certificate levels I and II suitable to the study area.

It provides advice about the VET certificates that the QSA has a delegation to register[16]. Schools receive assistance about these qualifications, units of competency and their assessment from the QSA. The qualifications may also be delivered by another registered training organisation (RTO). Certificates offered outside those recommended are the responsibility of the school.

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[16] The QSA has a delegation from the Training and Employment Recognition Council to register schools to provide VET certificates at levels I and II (and Level II in information technology only).

Assessment of a VET certificate is competency based. Schools must develop a delivery and assessment strategy as per standard 9 of the AQTF[17] requirements. No study plans are required from schools offering stand-alone certificates.

Students can achieve one or more certificate qualifications, progress from one certificate level to the next and where possible undertake level III qualifications. Students can complete certificates over different times.

Guidelines on work placement are provided:
- certificate I: 10 days
- certificate II: 20 days
- certificate III: 20 days.

Section 2: Approach B: Vocational learning strands

This section contains the following:

Aims

The aims are the statements of long-term outcomes, attitudes and values students may obtain from completing the strand.

General objectives

The objectives include:
- content objectives (the factual knowledge students should acquire)
- process objectives (the cognitive skills students should gain)
- skill objectives (the practical skills students should learn)
- affective objectives (the attitudes, values and feelings the SAS aims to develop).

Course organisation

This describes the SAS's strands and their subject matter, connection with Years 1 to 10 KLA syllabuses and Years 8 to 10 subject syllabuses relevant to the study area.

A course of study consists of:
- the study area core that relates to the key ideas, concepts and principles essential to the study area and useful for focusing learning and understanding throughout the course
- units/electives/contexts that relate to subject matter, ideas, topics and/or learning relevant to the range of study possible within the study area.

Schools select the strand they wish to offer. The number of units/electives/contexts depends on the study area. Usually four to twenty are developed that incorporate the vocational, social, cultural, artistic, and/or life skills identified for the study area. A school-developed unit of work may range from 10 hours to a semester in length.

The school plans a course of study and develops a study plan of four semesters. Assessment is based on five levels of achievement ranging from Very High Achievement to Very Limited Achievement.

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[17] AQTF is the Australian Quality Training Framework which is the basis for Australia's nationally consistent vocational education and training system. It includes two sets of standards: standards for registered training organisations and standards for state and territory registering or course accrediting bodies.

The minimum number of hours of timetabled school time including assessment for an Authority-registered subject is 55 hours per semester.

A course of study is usually pursued over two years.

Learning experiences

This section states the learning experiences likely to contribute to student development as outlined in the aims and general objectives. These should encourage teachers to use contexts for practical activities and tasks.

Assessment

This includes:
- QSA's principles of assessment
- assessment techniques using criteria-and-standards-based assessment
- summative assessment criteria and standards for each exit levels of achievement
- ways of determining exit levels of achievement, including a minimum requirements table
- organisational principles for, or ways of, completing an assessment plan for a strand as outlined on the SAS study plan.

Other information

- statement on language education for senior syllabuses
- statement on quantitative concepts and skills for senior syllabuses
- information on resources such as community resources, reference books, electronic media, computer programs, periodicals, useful addresses.

Section 3: Approach C: VET Strands

This section provides advice on the training packages at certificate level I suitable to the study area.

Semesters 1 and 2

Generally the certificates identified as suitable for delivery by schools are to be offered over two semesters, preferably semesters 1 and 2. Assessment of the certificate is competency-based.

Schools register with the QSA to deliver the specific certificate, or partner with a registered training organisation (RTO). The QSA helps schools develop courses and competency-based assessment.

A delivery-and-assessment strategy for a school is required as per standard 9 of the AQTF requirements.

Semesters 3 and 4

The other two semesters of a course of study are based on units that complement the content and skills of the industry certificate undertaken in Semesters 1 and 2. These units can be selected from strands in Approach B.

Assessment for these semesters is based on criteria and standards. Schools will be able to receive assistance on course development and criteria-and-standards-based assessment.

A study plan for the two semesters is required.

Approach C provides students with an opportunity to achieve a VET qualification at certificate level 1 and a level of achievement.

Appendix 4: Mapping subjects against fields of employment

ASCED Fields of Education											
01 Natural and physical sciences	02 Information Technology	03 Engineering and related technologies	04 Architecture and building	05 Agriculture, environ-mental and related studies	06 Health	07 Education	08 Manage-ment and commerce	09 Society and culture	10 Creative Arts	11 Food, hospitality and personal services	12 Mixed field programs
Authority subjects Mathematics A Mathematics B Mathematics C Biology Chemistry Physics Earth Science	Information Technology Systems Information Processing & Technology	Engineering Technology Technology Studies Aerospace Studies (in development	Graphics	Agricultural Science	Health Education		Accounting Tourism (in develop-ment) Business Communi-cation & Technolo-gies Economics Business Organisation & Manage-ment	English Legal Studies Political Studies Ancient History Modern History Study of Society	Visual Art Music Drama Film and Television Dance	Hospitality Studies	

	ASCED Fields of Education											
	01 Natural and physical sciences	02 Information Technology	03 Engineering and related technologies	04 Architecture and building	05 Agriculture, environ-mental and related studies	06 Health	07 Education	08 Manage-ment and commerce	09 Society and culture	10 Creative Arts	11 Food, hospitality and personal services	12 Mixed field programs
Authority subjects (continued)	Multi-Strand Science Science21 (trial) Marine Studies								Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Geography Home Economics Philosophy and Reason Study of Religion French			

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	ASCED Fields of Education											
	01 Natural and physical sciences	02 Information Technology	03 Engineering and related technologies	04 Architecture and building	05 Agriculture, environ- mental and related studies	06 Health	07 Education	08 Manage- ment and commerce	09 Society and culture	10 Creative Arts	11 Food, hospitality and personal services	12 Mixed field programs
Authority subjects (continued)									German Indonesian Chinese Italian Japanese Korean Modern Greek Russian Spanish Vietnamese Polish Latin			
Extension subjects									English (Literature) French German Indonesian	Music (Perfor-mance)		

	ASCED Fields of Education											
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
	Natural and physical sciences	Information Technology	Engineering and related technologies	Architecture and building	Agriculture, environ-mental and related studies	Health	Education	Manage-ment and commerce	Society and culture	Creative Arts	Food, hospitality and personal services	Mixed field programs
Authority-registered subjects	Pre-vocational Mathematics Marine & Aquatic Practices	Information & Communi-cations Technology	Manufac-turing		Agriculture & Horticulture	Physical Education Recreation		Business Retail Tourism	English Communi-cation Religion and Ethics Social and community studies	Creative Arts	Hospitality	Literacy & Numeracy being redeveloped
External senior	Mathematics A Mathematics B Biology Chemistry Physics							Accounting	English Legal Studies Ancient History Modern History Philosophy and Reason Geography Chinese	Art Drama		

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Glossary

AQTF stands for Australian Quality Training Framework.

ASCED stands for Australian Standard Classification of Education Definitions.

ATC stands for Australian Technical College.

Authority subject is an area of learning
1. for which
    − there is an approved syllabus or accredited syllabus, course or subject; and
    − the Authority has approved a work program under the Act; and
2. in which results are subject to the QSA's procedures for moderation.

Area of learning means a category in which different types of courses of study fit. Currently, there are four areas of learning that can contribute toward the Senior Statement and the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) — Authority subjects, Authority-registered subjects, vocational education and training (VET), and recognised courses and subjects.

Authority-registered subject is an area of learning
- for which there is a subject area specification (SAS) and a study plan approved by the QSA or, the QSA has approved a work program under the Act; and
- in which results are not currently subject to the QSA's procedures for moderation.

Curriculum in this paper means a collection of subjects.
- *State-wide available curriculum* means all possible combinations of subjects existing in the system
- *Individuals experienced curriculum* means a particular combination of subjects selected by a student from subjects offered by the school attended by that student.

Embedded VET refers to the situation where VET units of competency are written into Authority syllabuses so that the subject covers the criteria and standards set by the syllabus as well as the competency required of the VET component.

ETRF stands for Education and Training Reforms for the Future.

Experiential learning is a way of learning that is directly related to the student's world and involves identifying and solving problems. The Pitman Report, *The Senior Certificate: A new deal* (2002), uses the term to describe a range of specific life skills that were not covered in the course of the usual studies in the senior school: personal growth and development, personal career management and management of personal finances. These skills are instrumental in the day-to-day experiences of students throughout their lives and can be acquired through experiential learning strategies.

FP stands for Field Position.

KLA stands for Key Learning Area.

Key Learning Area syllabuses or KLAs comprise Queensland's common curriculum for the compulsory years of schooling (Years P to 10). Each KLA describes learning outcomes for each level of the eight nationally agreed key learning areas:
- Health and Physical Education (HPE)
- The Arts
- English

- Languages other than English (LOTE)
- Mathematics
- Science
- Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE)
- Technology.

Knowledge economy

Technological developments in the 20th century have transformed the majority of wealth-creating work from physically-based to knowledge-based work. Technology and knowledge are now the key factors of production. With increased mobility of information and the global work force, knowledge and expertise can be transported instantaneously around the world. We are now an information society in a knowledge economy where knowledge management is essential.

Level of achievement

On completion of the course of study, the school is required to award each student one of the five exit levels of achievement: Very High Achievement, High Achievement, Sound Achievement, Limited Achievement, or Very Limited Achievement. This judgment is based on how well students have met the exit criteria described in the syllabus.

OP stands for Overall Position.

Outcomes-based education focuses on the development and demonstration of learning outcomes. Attention is directed towards:

- what the outcomes explicitly ask students to know and to be able to do with what they know
- the outcomes that are appropriate for the developmental levels of particular groups of students
- how outcomes can be used in planning for learning and assessment.

Thus, students, teachers, parents/carers and others in the community will be able to share a common understanding of what is expected.

Overall Position (OP) indicates a student's rank-order position based on overall achievement in Authority subjects. It is one piece of information recorded on the Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES).

New Basics refers to four curriculum organisers that are essential for a futures-oriented curriculum:

- Life pathways and social futures: who am I and where am I going?
- Multiliteracies and communications media: how do I make sense of, and communicate with, the world?
- Active citizenship: what are my rights and responsibilities in communities, cultures and economies?
- Environments and technologies: How do I describe, analyse and shape the world around me?

QCE stands for Queensland Certificate of Education.

QSA stands for Queensland Studies Authority.

QTAC stands for Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre.

Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) refers to the award attained by a young person who has achieved 20 credits in the required pattern and who has met the literacy and numeracy requirements. The learning achievements banked during the Senior Phase of Learning contribute towards the qualification.

Quality Criteria is the mechanism for deciding whether a course of study can contribute to the Senior Statement and the QCE. The Quality Criteria ensure that learning achievements from courses contributing to the QCE are of sufficient size, standing and depth and facilitate young people's transition from school to the next phase of their lives. All courses that meet the Quality Criteria are appropriate to the Senior Phase of Learning.

Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre or QTAC provides and operates a centralised tertiary application system and publishes comprehensive information for prospective applicants. QTAC currently processes

applications for admission to the majority of undergraduate courses offered by the publicly funded universities in Queensland, Bond University, the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania, and to some courses at universities in northern New South Wales. It also processes applications to full-time associate diploma, advanced diploma and diploma courses in Queensland institutes of TAFE and some private providers of post-secondary courses.

SAS stands for study area specification.

SAT stands for school-based apprenticeship and traineeship.

Senior Phase of Learning begins with young people registering with the QSA the year before they turn 16 and ends when the QSA awards them a QCE.

Summative assessment, while also providing feedback to students, parents, and teachers, provides information on which levels of achievement are determined at exit from the course of study. Students' achievements are matched to the standards of exit criteria, which are derived from the general objectives of the course. Thus, summative assessment provides the information for certification at the end of the course.

The other form of assessment is known as *formative assessment*. It is used to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers about achievement over the course of study. This enables students and teachers to identify the students' strengths and weaknesses. The formative techniques used should be similar to summative assessment techniques, which students will meet later in the course. This provides students with experience in responding to particular types of tasks under appropriate conditions. It is advisable that each assessment technique be used formatively before it is used summatively.

Stand-alone VET is a term that describes VET qualifications completed using competency-based assessment only and offered in accordance with AQTF requirements. This means that VET is delivered as a course in itself. Outside Queensland schools, all VET is delivered as stand-alone VET.

Study area specifications or SASs are frameworks from which Authority-registered subjects are developed. Schools can use SASs to develop courses of study based on three approaches:
- APPROACH A: Stand-alone delivery of VET certificate(s)
- APPROACH B: Vocational learning strands (no VET)
- APPROACH C: Strand allowing for a VET outcome

Syllabus is a document that supplies a curriculum framework for a course or subject either developed and approved, accredited, or recognised by the QSA. QSA syllabuses provide advice about the scope of learning or subject area and any mandatory components for learning, assessment, standards and quality assurance required for reporting or certification. Schools interpret a syllabus and develop work programs or study plans. The syllabus provides the basis for schools to decide on the curriculum they offer.

Verification folio
For verification purposes, schools must submit folios (verification folios) of student work to the QSA in October of Year 12. The QSA looks at the folios to ensure the quality of each school's decision-making about standards of achievement meets the syllabus's descriptors of standards.

Vocational education and training or VET in this paper refers to the nationally accredited training package qualifications.

Guiding questions

All these questions are in the online response form at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/consultations.

If you prefer to send us a response via email, fax or post, please use the questions below to structure your response.

In your response, remember to tell us:
- the name of your organisation (if applicable)
- the capacity in which you write, i.e. whether you are a parent, student, teacher, employer, etc.
- whether you live in a rural or urban area.

Valued knowledge and skills
- What are the skills and attributes that young people need to engage with their communities and to participate as active citizens?
- Are there some things all subjects should include? What are they?
- Do different post-school pathways have different requirements? If so, what do young people need to know and be able to do to move successfully from school:
  - to work?
  - to university?
  - to vocational education and training?
- How can the knowledge and skills that young people need be included in syllabuses?

The structure of QSA syllabuses and syllabus design
- How should we be delivering knowledge to meet the learning needs of young people in the 21st century?
  - Should all syllabuses provide for two-year courses of study only or could courses of study vary in length?
  - Should all syllabuses provide for courses that are 220 hours long? Should the courses vary in length? How long should they be?
  - Should all syllabuses be organised in the same way, or do different sorts of learning lend themselves to different types of organisation? If syllabuses should be organised differently, how should they vary?
  - How should we deal differently with varying complexity or levels of difficulty? For example, do we need the three mathematics subjects, Mathematics A, B and C?
  - Should artificial barriers between related subject areas be broken down? How do we deal with duplication across subject areas?
  - Is the academic basis of most Authority subjects the best form of organisation, or is a trans-disciplinary approach a better way to organise learning?
- Is it best to have two types of subjects — Authority and Authority-registered subjects — of very different status in the Senior Phase of Learning?
- What are the practical implications of changes to the way we structure syllabuses?
  - What are the implications for schools? For example, how would changes affect timetabling and delivery methods?
  - How would the professional development of teachers need to change?

– What are the considerations for initial teacher education?
– Would tertiary entrance procedures need to change?
– How would changes impact on assessment and moderation procedures?

Pathways and the suite of syllabuses

- Are the subjects in the current suite the right ones, relevant to living and working in a knowledge economy? (See Appendix 1 for the full list of syllabuses.) What subjects should be included or not be included?
- Are there too many subjects? If so, which subjects should be deleted?
- Do the syllabuses currently available provide study options that cater to the diversity of students participating in learning beyond Year 10? How could this be improved?
- How can the QSA develop syllabuses that build pathways and that capitalise on the QCE?

Year 10

- What is the purpose of Year 10? Is it the beginning of the Senior Phase of Learning, the end of the Middle Phase of Learning or can it be both for different students?
- What learning experiences are relevant and valuable for Year 10 students?
- How can we strengthen the links between Year 10 and Year 11 to ensure a smooth transition to the Senior Phase of Learning?

Ongoing review

- Developing new learning products
  – How do we develop syllabuses that provide students access to a wide variety of career pathways rather than a choice between academic preparation and vocational training?
  – Is the amount of time to introduce a new syllabus too long to reflect new knowledge, changes in employment areas and technology?
  – How do we make sure that we don't duplicate or have too many syllabuses?
- Reviewing the syllabuses
  – How do we know that QSA's syllabuses are serving the needs of students?