Essential English 2019 v1.1

Subject report 2020

February 2021

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Introduction

The first summative year for the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system was unexpectedly challenging. The demands of delivering new assessment requirements and processes were amplified by disruptions to senior schooling arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant the new system was forced to adapt before it had been introduced — the number of summative internal assessments was reduced from four to three. The three included the common internal assessment (CIA). Schools and the QCAA worked together to implement the new assessment processes and the 2020 Year 12 cohort received accurate and reliable subject results.

Queensland's innovative new senior assessment system combines the flexibility and authenticity of school-based assessment, developed and marked by classroom teachers, with the rigour and consistency of external assessment set and marked by QCAA-trained assessment writers and markers. The system does not privilege one form of assessment over another, and both teachers and QCAA assessors share the role of making high-stakes judgments about the achievement of students. Our commitment to rigorous external quality assurance guarantees the reliability of both internal and external assessment outcomes.

Using evidence of student learning to make judgments on student achievement is just one purpose of assessment. In a sophisticated assessment system, it is also used by teachers to inform pedagogy and by students to monitor and reflect on their progress.

This post-cycle report on the summative assessment program is not simply being produced as a matter of record. It is intended that it will play an active role in future assessment cycles by providing observations and findings in a way that is meaningful and helpful to support the teaching and learning process, provide future students with guidance to support their preparations for summative assessment, and promote transparency and accountability in the broader education community. Reflection and research are necessary for the new system to achieve stability and to continue to evolve. The annual subject report is a key medium for making it accessible to schools and others.

Background

Purpose

The annual subject report is an analysis of the previous year's full summative assessment cycle. This includes endorsement of summative internal assessment (IA) instruments and the implementation of the CIA.

The report provides an overview of the key outcomes of one full teaching, learning and assessment cycle for each subject, including:

- information about the application of the syllabus objectives through the design of internal assessments and the CIA.

It also provides advice to schools to promote continuous improvement, including:

- identification of effective practices in the design of valid, accessible and reliable assessments

- identification of areas for improvement and recommendations to enhance the design of valid, accessible and reliable assessment instruments.

Audience and use

This report should be read by school leaders, subject leaders and teachers to inform teaching and learning and assessment preparation. The report is to be used by schools and teachers to assist in assessment design practice.

The report is publicly available to promote transparency and accountability. Students, parents, community members and other education stakeholders can learn about the assessment practices for Applied (Essential) subjects.

Report preparation

The report includes analyses of data and other information from the endorsement processes and CIA development, and advice from the chief endorser. It was developed in consultation with and support from QCAA subject matter experts.

Subject data summary

Subject enrolments

Number of schools offering the subject: 437.

Completion of units	Unit 1	Unit 2	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	14 578	15 535	15 895

Units 1 and 2 results

Number of students	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not rated
Unit 1	12 326	1944	308
Unit 2	13 754	1492	289

Final standards allocation

The number of students awarded each standard across the state are as follows.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	1090	5694	8126	926	59

Internal assessment

The following information and advice pertain to the assessment design for Units 3 and 4 instruments IA1, IA3 and IA4, which are developed by schools. These instruments have undergone quality assurance processes informed by the attributes of quality assessment.

Endorsement

Endorsement is the quality assurance process based on the attributes of validity and accessibility. These attributes are categorised further as priorities for assessment and each priority can be further broken down into assessment practices. Data presented in the assessment design sections identifies the reasons why IA instruments were not endorsed at Application 1, by the priority for assessments. An IA may have been identified more than once for a priority for assessment, e.g. it may have demonstrated a misalignment to both subject matter and to the assessment objective. Refer to the quality assurance tools for detailed information about the assessment practices for each assessment instrument.

Total number of items endorsed in Application 1

Number of items submitted each event	IA1	IA3	IA4
Total number of instruments	443	443	443
Percentage endorsed	76	60	61

Internal assessment 1 (IA1)

Extended response — spoken/signed response

Students create a persuasive spoken/signed text that explores an issue or idea currently represented in the media or that the student is individually interested in. It is a persuasive spoken/signed response where students construct representations of identities, places, events and/or concepts and invite audiences to take up positions.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — validity practices

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	40
Authentication	20
Authenticity	26
Item construction	20
Scope and scale	26

*Total number of submissions: 443. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- only the cognitive verbs from the syllabus assessment objectives and the particulars suitable for the task, e.g. purpose and audience

- schools' own contexts using appropriate student roles and audiences that were different from the sample assessment instrument, thereby creating meaningful and unique assessment instruments relevant to students' experiences

- alignment between authentication strategies and checkpoints by ensuring there were no ambiguities or contradictions between them

- open-ended tasks, which required students to present their own perspectives — these instruments were often more authentic than those asking students to select a particular thesis from a school-provided list

- appropriate scope and scale — the QCAA sample assessment instrument modelled the requirement for students to focus on only one issue in their response, and the schools that followed this approach satisfied this assessment practice.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- incorporate only cognitive verbs from the assessment objectives, e.g. *use*, *construct*, *select*

- include meaningful contexts by specifically identifying a task's audience and purpose, and ensuring they are relevant to students' experience and level of learning, i.e. allowing students to represent themselves rather than adopting a role beyond their years of experience, e.g. a scientist or an expert on the environment

- use a variety of authentication strategies

- specify a draft to be submitted in the same mode as the required response, i.e. a spoken/signed delivery so that student feedback is relevant to the skills being assessed (as modelled on the QCAA website and Portal)

- provide a specific context that has an open-ended task instruction as required by the extended response technique. This means providing students with issues (e.g. educational opportunities, the environment) in the task statement rather than thesis-style statements containing perspectives

- are context- and cohort-specific, rather than copying the QCAA sample assessment either entirely or in the main

- do not include additional elements, e.g. posters or advertisements not required by the syllabus

- are checked carefully so the instructions in the task statement do not contradict those in the scaffolding, either in re-stating information or providing highly specific prompts that limit unique responses or lead to pre-determined ones.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — accessibility practices

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Transparency	27
Language	9
Layout	4
Bias avoidance	2

*Total number of submissions: 443. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- an explicitly identified genre that was adhered to throughout, which prevented ambiguity about how students were to respond

- evidence of proofreading so that it is free from errors and models accurate spelling, grammar, punctuation and other textual features

- effective formatting of task instructions (as modelled by the QCAA sample assessment instrument), e.g. separating the genre, audience and purpose from the task statement

- correctly aligned bullet points for checkpoints — viewing tasks by using Print Preview prior to uploading enables a final review of layout to ensure that it is clear and not distracting, e.g. avoiding misaligned text

- diverse and unique tasks by using appropriate language that made tasks accessible to all students.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- use consistent terminology throughout — the labelling of one genre in different ways creates ambiguity about how students are required to respond, e.g. not using 'persuasive speech', 'talk' and 'visual presentation' interchangeably throughout the instrument

- incorporate cues that align to the specifications, objectives and instrument-specific standards

- are proofread to avoid errors in punctuation and grammar that may impede meaning or create ambiguity.

Internal assessment 3 (IA3)

Extended response — multimodal response

Students construct a multimodal text responding to a popular culture text or texts for a specified purpose and audience — the response includes a combination of at least two modes, one of which must be spoken/signed. In their response, students explain representations of identities, places, events and/or concepts.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — validity practices

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	77
Authentication	11
Authenticity	41
Item construction	21
Scope and scale	47

*Total number of submissions: 443. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- only the cognitive verbs required by the assessment objectives — some tasks asked students to *compare* rather than to *explain*, or included additional non-assessable cognitive verbs such as *appraise* and *analyse*

- a concise sentence pattern in the task statement that required students to explain only one representation (e.g. 'Explain the representation of … in …' or 'Explain how the concept of … has been represented in …'), which allowed students to demonstrate the required cognitions

- a real-life context that created meaningful and relevant assessment instruments, e.g. one school chose their own social media page, a real context that was within the students' realm of experiences. Schools that specified an appropriate audience that students could relate to also enabled students to establish a role and relationship with audiences as required

- open-ended tasks where the audience, purpose and genre complemented each other and created authentic tasks with a real-world application of learning

- appropriate scale by including only the components mandated by the syllabus, thereby enabling students to respond within syllabus conditions across the range of standards.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include only the specific cognitive verbs required by the assessment objectives, e.g. *explain*

- include a central focus for students to concentrate on in their response

- use concise sentence patterns in the task statement to explicitly define what students are required to do

- instruct students to explain only one representation in a popular culture text

- include a real-life context for the task

- are different from the QCAA sample assessment instrument

- include authentication strategies from the ones provided in the Endorsement application and ensure checkpoints align with syllabus conditions

- specify a draft to be submitted in the same mode as the required response, i.e. a multimodal with a spoken/signed component so that student feedback is relevant to the skills being assessed (as modelled on the QCAA website and Portal)

- are open-ended tasks where the audience and purpose facilitate unique and authentic student responses

- are created using the assessment objectives to guide the construction of the task.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — accessibility practices

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Transparency	36
Language	32
Layout	7
Bias avoidance	4

*Total number of submissions: 443. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- clear, concise sentences that avoided jargon or overly sophisticated vocabulary, which allowed for more effective communication of task requirements

- single bullet points (without duplication)

- clear format, which can be checked by viewing tasks using Print Preview prior to uploading

- consistent language throughout, e.g. consistently referring to 'persuasive speech' rather than alternating between 'talk', 'PowerPoint presentation' and 'persuasive speech'.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- are carefully proofread and language is checked for ambiguity, contradictions, and errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling and layout

- contain clear, concise sentences

- use plain language and avoid jargon

- use correctly aligned bullet points — viewing tasks using Print Preview prior to uploading enables a final review of layout to ensure that it is clear and not distracting, e.g. avoiding misaligned text and duplication of bullet points

- contain checkpoints clearly indicating teacher feedback on only one draft, ensuring that the draft includes the spoken/signed component of the multimodal response.

Internal assessment 4 (IA4)

Extended response — written response

Students create a written text that invites a specified audience to take up a position about representations of an Australian social group.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — validity practices

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	100
Authentication	2
Authenticity	21
Item construction	25
Scope and scale	19

*Total number of submissions: 443. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- examples from the syllabus that were adapted to suit schools' own contexts

- instructions asking students to create a representation, rather than to identify or explain one

- explicit instructions for students to 'position audiences to accept or reject representations of an Australian social group'

- a specific purpose, which enabled students to more effectively reflect this in their response

- relevant and real contexts for students, e.g. some schools used online media genres such as blogs and gave students the role of 'social influencers'. Other authentic contexts included a writing competition for high school students, an email in role as a character to another character in the class-studied text, a personal reflective journal, etc.

- evidence of having carefully considered syllabus requirements, their students' needs/interests and their own school context

- an appropriate amount of scaffolding, which avoided providing students with too many cues about where to put their ideas/arguments in a sentence-by-sentence structure. Students are assessed on sequencing their own ideas and independently developing their own response

- an appropriate number of elements (e.g. only one character instead of several), which enabled students to demonstrate what they know and can do within syllabus conditions.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- use real-world contexts

- use a variety of strategies to ensure authentication

- ask students to *create* a representation, not *explain* or *justify*

- do not include additional elements, e.g. asking students to 'create a storyboard', which is not an assessable component

- incorporate a specific purpose

- do not include excessive scaffolding

- focus on one character rather than several characters.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — accessibility practices

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Transparency	23
Language	43
Layout	9
Bias avoidance	7

*Total number of submissions: 443. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- a clear genre and context

- the use of explicit and concise sentences about task requirements throughout the assessment instrument

- a simple and consistent layout.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- use clear and concise sentences

- do not include jargon

- use a simple and consistent layout, informed by the QCAA sample assessment instruments and the task-generated sheets in the Endorsement application.

Common internal assessment: Internal assessment 2

The CIA is common to all schools and is developed by the QCAA. Schools are able to administer this assessment during the CIA phase chosen by the school in Unit 3 once it has been provided by the QCAA. It is administered flexibly under supervised conditions and is marked by the school according to a QCAA-developed common marking scheme. The CIA is not privileged over the school-developed summative assessment.

> **2020 COVID-19 adjustments**
>
> To support Queensland schools, teachers and students to manage learning and assessment during the evolving COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the QCAA Board approved the administration of two CIA phases, instead of the originally scheduled four phases, for Applied (Essential) subjects.
>
> Schools that did not administer the CIA1 in Term 1 implemented a CIA single phase in October.
>
> Schools were able to administer the CIA at any time during the three-week phase. However, administering the CIA in the final week of the phase, rather than earlier in the phase, allowed for more teaching and learning time as well as time to engage with seen stimulus.

Assessment design

Assessment description

The 2020 CIA topics were:

- personal resilience
- group resilience.

The single-phase assessment instrument consisted of two sections, each requiring a short response about a stimulus:

- Section 1 — one seen written stimulus
- Section 2 — two unseen visual stimulus (students selected one to respond to).

Section 1

Students responded to a question about the representation of group resilience in a transcript of a speech, *Group resilience: Coming together to restore hope*. The speech was delivered by a local council leader at a community meeting.

The question was designed to elicit explanations about how language features and text structures were used to create two representations of group resilience, and how beliefs underpinned the written stimulus.

For each representation, students were required to explain two:

- language features
- text structures
- beliefs.

Students responded to a question about how audiences were positioned to view the concept of group resilience in their chosen stimulus.

Two visual stimulus were provided:

- an image located on the second page of students' school diaries

- a poster displayed in a community's lunchroom to promote group resilience.

The question was designed to elicit explanations about how language features and text structures were used to create two points of view about group resilience, as well as how cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and/or beliefs underpinned each visual stimulus.

Students were required to explain two:

- points of view

- language features

- text structures

- cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and/or beliefs.

Assessment conditions

- Time: 1½ hours plus 15 minutes of planning time, delivered in one continuous session or 90 minutes allocated over no more than three consecutive sessions

- The length for each response was 200–300 words.

Assessment objectives

The assessment technique was used to determine student achievement in the following objectives:

3. explain representations of identities, places, events and concepts

4. explain the ways cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpin texts and influence meaning

5. explain how language features and text structures shape perspectives and invite particular responses

6. select and use subject matter to support perspectives

9. use language features to inform audiences.

Note: Objectives 1, 2, 7 and 8 were not assessed in this instrument.