

SAIs — an overview

Transcript of SAIs and BonSAI video 1

Transcript of video one of five

This video is available from www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/tertiary-entrance/sais-bonsai/bonsai-videos

Voiceover

Subject Achievement Indicators or SAIs are a numerical representation that show how Year 12 students have achieved within their subject group, within their school. Teachers place students in a rank order and assign SAIs at the end of a two-year course of study. They use evidence in student folios to make decisions about differences in students' achievement. SAIs are the primary input data used by the QCAA for the scaling process used to calculate Overall Positions known as OPs and Field Positions known as FPs.

The highest achieving student in a subject group is assigned an SAI of 400, and the lowest achieving student is assigned an SAI of 200. All other students in the subject group are assigned a number between 400 and 200 to represent how they have achieved when compared with other students in the group. Because SAIs are assigned independently within each subject group, an SAI of 400 could represent quite different types of achievement. For example, an SAI of 400 might be assigned to a student with a Very High Achievement in one subject, whereas an SAI of 400 might represent a result within the High Achievement band in another subject. Every subject group is different, so SAIs only have meaning within an individual subject group, within that school.

SAIs are allocated only to OP-eligible students in large subject groups of 14 or more OP-eligible students. Students who are not OP-eligible are not assigned SAIs.

Karen Wilson

Manager

Quantitative Unit

QCAA

It's very important that teachers understand that the QCAA uses SAIs, not levels of achievement to calculate OPs. For this reason, a careful and accurate decision-making process is crucial because teachers really do hold their students' OPs in their hands. Students' work needs to be carefully compared, firstly to create the rank order, then to assign the numbers between 400 and 200 to represent differences between students within that rank order.

It's essential that the numbers are an accurate representation of the differences in the way students have achieved.

Voice over

As part of the verification process at the end of Year 12, teachers must complete a Form R6. They make decisions about student achievement based on the evidence they have from assessment tasks, comparing student performance to syllabus standards. SAIs are assigned after the verification process has taken place.

Karen Wilson
Manager
Quantitative Unit
QCAA

Sometimes teachers ask why they have to assign SAIs when they have already completed the verification process. SAIs allow for much more fine-grained decisions about the differences between student work which is what we need to calculate OPs. When they are awarding levels of achievement, teachers are comparing work to syllabus standards. When they are assigning SAIs, they are comparing students' work to other students' work and deciding how similarly or how differently students have achieved.

Voice over

SAIs allow for the relative achievement of students to be represented in a way that placing them on the Form R6 does not. For example, students with work at lower levels of achievement are likely to be placed closer together in the rank order than students whose work matches higher levels of achievement.

This is supported by the way standards descriptors are written in syllabuses. At the 'E' standard, students demonstrate a limited range of knowledge and skills. The work of different students who achieve at this low level of achievement is likely to be fairly similar, so students would be assigned SAIs that place them closer together in the rank order.

Moving through the standards, students demonstrate a more extensive range of knowledge and skills.

This means that within the higher levels of achievement, more difference can be seen between student's work and therefore SAIs would be assigned that place students further apart in the rank order than students within the lower levels of achievement.

Teachers are the best people to assign SAIs — they know the assessment tasks and understand individual differences in student's responses. When there are a number of people teaching the same subject, they should work together to compare students' folios of work. The key to making good decisions about SAIs is to use professional judgment, based on the evidence in student folios.

SAI decisions should not be based on anything subjective, or on personal opinions. Special provision cannot be applied when making SAI decisions as this has already occurred at the assessment stage.

Decisions that are made based on evidence in folios are defensible and able to be explained to a variety of audiences, including students and parents. It is important for teachers to understand that SAIs are not a calculation, even though they involve assigning numbers.

The numbers are simply a way to represent where students sit in the rank order, either close together or further apart. The QCAA does not endorse any computer program that calculates SAIs. The BonSAI_2014 software, which is available free of charge on the QCAA website helps to make the process of assigning SAIs quick and easy.