

Common internal assessment: Guidelines for administration 2026

Essential English and Essential Mathematics

March 2026

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1 Purpose

The *Common internal assessment: Guidelines for administration* (GFA) is the key reference document for schools administering the common internal assessment (CIA) for Essential English and Essential Mathematics.

A succinct summary of tasks is provided in the [CIA checklist](#) at the end of this document. Detailed information is provided in each section.

2 CIA information

2.1 About the CIA

The CIA is developed by the QCAA and is common to all schools. It is administered under controlled conditions appropriate to the school context, and is marked internally by teachers in schools.

2.2 Phases of CIA delivery

In 2026, there are two CIA phases offered in Term 2. Schools select their preferred phase in the Student Management application (app) in the QCAA Portal. Essential English and Essential Mathematics CIAs can be delivered in different phases. For more information on the CIA delivery phases see [Memo 037/25](#).

Phase	Term	Materials delivered	Start CIA phase*	Completed by
Phase 1	Term 2 Weeks 1–5	Monday 30 March	Monday 20 April	Friday 22 May
Phase 2	Term 2 Weeks 5–9	Tuesday 12 May	Monday 18 May	Friday 19 June
Ancillary phase	Term 3 Weeks 5–9	Tuesday 4 August	Monday 10 August	Friday 11 September

***Note:** For Essential English, do not distribute seen stimulus before these dates.

Schools will receive their 2026 secure assessment materials in the week before their selected phase starts, except if a phase start date falls in the first week of the school term.

Schools can administer the assessment at an appropriate time, within the five week phase. They should ensure they provide sufficient teaching, learning and preparation time within the phase. Student preparation should include opportunities to engage with the relevant CIA subject matter to be assessed, and experience the types of CIA questions asked. For Essential English, the seen stimulus is to be distributed to students no more than three weeks prior to the day of the assessment. Sample assessment instruments and past papers are available in the **QCAA Portal > Syllabuses app > Resources > Units 3 and 4**.

2.2.1 Ancillary phase

The CIA ancillary phase is available to schools that deliver curriculum as flexible learning centres and students who require a [comparable assessment](#). A comparable assessment requires school-based approval, subject to the school's assessment policy, and the school must notify the QCAA in the AARA app. The QCAA will provide the comparable assessment.

3 Before administering the CIA

3.1 CIA materials

Schools will receive shrink-wrapped bundles of teacher packs and student packs.

Teacher packs are to be used for teacher preparation and to remove the need to open any student packs until the start of the session. Schools can make additional copies of teacher packs if needed.

Student packs, which include the seen and unseen stimulus, must only be given to students at the start of the session.

3.1.1 Essential English

Teacher pack	Student pack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question and response book • Seen stimulus book <p>Note: This is to be distributed to students no more than three weeks before the day of the assessment to enable deconstruction of the seen stimulus in class. Students can highlight and make their own annotations on the document. Teachers must ensure students do not have access to an annotated copy of the seen stimulus during the administration of the assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unseen stimulus book • Marking guide (paper) <p>Note: From 2027, this will no longer be printed and included in the teacher pack. It will be available in the fileShare app only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question and response book • Stimulus book — includes the seen and unseen stimulus
<p>Digital files</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marking guide (digital) available in the fileShare app > General files. It will only be available for the selected phase • CIA instrument-specific standards (ISS) available in the fileshare app > General files or in the QCAA Portal > Syllabuses > Essential English > Implementation > Additional materials 	

3.1.2 Essential Mathematics

Teacher pack	Student pack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question and response book • Formula book • Marking guide (paper). <p>Note: From 2027, this will no longer be printed and included in the teacher pack. It will be available in the fileShare app only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question and response book • Formula book
<p>Digital files</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marking guide (digital) available in the fileShare app > General files. It will only be available for the selected phase • CIA instrument-specific standards (ISS) available in the fileshare app > General files or in the QCAA Portal > Syllabuses > Essential Mathematics > Implementation > Additional materials 	

3.2 Receiving CIA materials

A secure courier will deliver the materials to the school's administration office/reception area only. Any existing local delivery arrangements do not apply to QCAA materials, e.g. deliveries to a facilities office.

3.3 Checking CIA materials

Schools will receive:

- shrink wrap bundles of teacher packs (see 3.1)
- shrink wrap bundles of student packs (see 3.1)

Schools must check they have received the required quantity of materials for each subject. Schools should then acknowledge receipt of materials and notify the [Program Management Unit](#) if more are required. The QCAA will email instructions regarding the process.

3.3.1 Alternative formats (AARA)

Schools will receive individually named bundle/s for students requiring printed alternative formats.

For students with approved use of:

- assistive technology — interactive digital files are provided
- printed format on coloured paper — non-interactive digital files are provided to print at the school.

Schools of Distance Education should notify the [Program Management Unit](#) if they require non-interactive digital files to be printed at the assessment venue.

Note: Digital files will be available in the **fileShare app > General files** on the same day as the scheduled delivery date. Further instructions for downloading files can be found in the fileShare quick step guide in the app.

3.4 Security

Schools should	Schools should not
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ maintain academic integrity at all times✓ store all CIA materials securely, including unused materials✓ access digital marking guides, which are available for the selected phases only. To download the secure documents select General files in the fileShare app. Note: From 2027 onwards, secure marking guides will no longer be printed and included in the teacher packs. They will be available in fileShare only.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ give students access to the marking guide✗ give any assessment materials before the phase start date, or after completing the assessment✗ publish or distribute the assessment in any form during the secure period✗ record or photograph the activity for promotion or media opportunities, including social media. This must occur outside the assessment session to protect students from being distracted and to ensure the security of the assessment.

4 Administering the CIA

The CIA is administered under standard supervised assessment conditions, including planning time. The school is responsible for the effective supervision of all students (typically by teachers). There is no access to teacher advice, guidance or feedback once the assessment begins.

Academic integrity must be maintained at all times.

4.1 CIA conditions and materials

4.1.1 Essential English

Schools administer the CIA during the selected phase according to syllabus conditions (see [Essential English 2025 v1.3](#), Assessment).

Students are not permitted to take notes or the seen stimulus book into the room when they sit the assessment.

QCAA provide	Schools provide	Students need
<ul style="list-style-type: none">student pack containing<ul style="list-style-type: none">question and response bookstimulus book	<ul style="list-style-type: none">planning paper<ul style="list-style-type: none">distributed to students at the start of the assessment.must be collected but should not be markedextra response paper, if required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">black or blue pen, or 2B pencil

4.1.2 Essential Mathematics

Schools administer the CIA during the selected phase according to syllabus conditions (see [Essential Mathematics 2025 v1.3](#), Assessment).

Students are not permitted to take notes or an annotated copy of the formula book into the room when they sit the assessment.

QCAA provide	Schools provide	Students need
<ul style="list-style-type: none">student pack containing<ul style="list-style-type: none">question and response bookQCAA formula book	<ul style="list-style-type: none">planning paper<ul style="list-style-type: none">distributed to students at the start of the assessmentmust be collected but should not be markedextra response paper, if required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">black or blue pen, or 2B pencilrulercalculator (any type except phones)

5 After administering the CIA

At the completion of the CIA schools must:

- collect all assessment materials — question and response books, stimulus books, formula books and any additional paper students used
- mark student responses using the QCAA-provided CIA marking guide
- store question and response books securely and prepare for quality assurance processes (see [QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0, Section 9.4](#)).
- store unused CIA materials securely until January of the following year.

Students must not be given any assessment materials after completing the CIA.

6 Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA)

The QCAA recognises that some students have disability, impairment and/or medical conditions, or experience other circumstances that may be a barrier to their performance in assessment. Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA) are designed to assist these students.

Schools administer the CIA with the QCAA-approved and principal-reported AARA in place. The QCAA approves the use of extra time and rest breaks in all examinations for Applied (Essential) subjects. QCAA approval is also required for alternative formats, computer and assistive technology. For more information, see [QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0, Section 6](#).

7 Comparable assessment

A student who is ill and/or unable to attend school for the scheduled CIA assessment should inform the principal's delegate or their relevant CIA supervisor (teacher) as soon as possible. Schools should then follow the procedure for managing student absence on assessment days as outlined in their school assessment policy. Students should sit their assessment in the school's nominated CIA phase window if possible, or up to one week after the nominated phase. Schools are advised to contact the AARA unit to discuss extensions beyond one additional week after the assessment window. Academic integrity must be maintained at all times.

The QCAA is aware that there are circumstances when it will not be possible to administer the CIA for an individual student during the nominated phase. In these circumstances, the QCAA will provide a comparable CIA. Eligibility for a comparable assessment will be determined by the school as outlined in their assessment policy.

Students who are eligible for a comparable assessment will be required to complete the CIA in the Ancillary phase in Term 3.

Schools must notify the QCAA by **Friday of the last week of their selected phase** of any student who will need to sit a comparable assessment. Report this comparable IA2 assessment in the AARA app. There is no need to submit evidence to support this notification. Additionally, schools will receive a *School information request form* at the end of Term 2. This allows the school to confirm any students who need to complete the comparable CIA.

8 Finding out more

Enquiries about:	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> changing your school's nominated delivery phase other quality assurance processes 	Quality Assurance Unit qau@qcaa.qld.edu.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivery of test materials 	Program Management Unit 1300 239 227 CIA@qcaa.qld.edu.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uploading student results or enrolments 	Certification Unit (07) 3864 0425 certification@qcaa.qld.edu.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uploading student samples for Applied QA meetings 	Applied Quality Assurance Unit (07) 3864 0375 AppliedQA@qcaa.qld.edu.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other Essential English CIA 	Essential English learning area (07) 3120 6173 EssentialEnglish@qcaa.qld.edu.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other Essential Mathematics CIA 	Essential Mathematics learning area (07) 3864 0444 EssentialMaths@qcaa.qld.edu.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA) 	Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA) Unit 1300 381 575 aara@qcaa.qld.edu.au

9 CIA checklist

Before administering the CIA

- Check your school is engaging with the correct topics. [Memo 037/25](#) notified schools of the 2026 topics for Essential English.
- Check which CIA phase your school is registered for in the **QCAA Portal > Student Management app > Admin > Subject offerings**. [Memo 037/25](#) reminded schools to select the Essential English and/or Essential Mathematics phase of delivery.
- Ensure the selected phase suits the school context.
- Urgently request approval for any change to the CIA phase by contacting the [Quality Assurance Unit](#).
- Check that the correct students have been enrolled in Units 3 and 4 of Essential English (2025–2026) and Essential Mathematics (2025–2026) in the Student Management app in the QCAA Portal
- Ensure applications are submitted for students requiring AARA, including alternative formats.
- Ensure relevant staff are registered to use, and know how to use, the fileShare app in the QCAA Portal.
- Contact the [Program Management Unit](#) if materials do not arrive at the appropriate time.
- Store all CIA materials, including unused materials, securely (even if unable to complete the assessment).

Administering the CIA

- Check the required quantity of materials for each subject has been received and notify the [Program Management Unit](#) if more are required.
- Acknowledge receipt of materials.
- Administer the CIA under standard supervised assessment conditions.

After administering the CIA

- Collect all assessment materials.
- Mark student responses using the QCAA-provided CIA marking guides.
- Store question and response books securely
- Prepare for quality assurance processes (see [QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0, Section 9.4](#)).
- Store unused CIA materials securely until January of the following year.