Moderation handbook for Authority subjects

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In 1972, a system of externally moderated school-based assessment was introduced in Queensland to replace external examinations at the end of Year 12. The shift to school-based curriculum development and assessment distributed the responsibility for quality assurance to the system as a whole.

Queensland teachers use the processes and requirements outlined in the syllabuses and Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) documents to design continuous school-based assessment programs and make judgments about standards achieved by their students, including summative judgments for reporting purposes. Schools do this in partnership with the QCAA, the independent statutory body of the Queensland Government responsible for managing Queensland’s system of externally moderated school-based assessment (EMSBA) and senior secondary certification.

In the Queensland system of EMSBA, schools will use the advice offered by panels to make decisions about levels of achievement and relative achievement placements for all that cohort of students, including those whose work was not included as samples in the school submission.

In order to support the system, the QCAA provides training for review panels and school moderators, develops policies and procedures for moderation and provides professional development.

The coordination of state-wide monitoring and verification relies on a commitment from schools to release staff for panels across all jurisdictions and districts. An immense logistical operation takes place providing samples to more than 4000 panellists, who then meet in QCAA district locations to review schools’ submissions of student work.

Schools and panel chairs consult and negotiate about school judgments about the application of syllabus standards and levels of achievement.

1.2 Purpose

The Queensland system of externally moderated school-based assessment has been evolving for nearly 40 years, with rigorous quality-assurance processes in place to guarantee public confidence in the system. In order to ensure that the levels of achievement in Authority subjects match the requirements of syllabuses, the QCAA conducts seven phases that together form the moderation process. This handbook describes these phases and the way the partnership between schools and the QCAA facilitates moderation and quality assurance of student achievement.

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1 Authority subjects are based on syllabuses that have been approved and issued by the QCAA. Results in Authority subjects can count in the calculation of overall positions (OPs) and field positions (FPs), the most common selection devices used by the tertiary sector.
1.3 Scope

This handbook describes the:

- phases of the moderation processes for senior Authority subjects
- principles of externally moderated school-based assessment
- partnership between schools and the QCAA that facilitates senior Authority moderation
- panel system that conducts the moderation of senior Authority subjects.

1.4 Principles

- Teachers use syllabuses to design teaching, learning and continuous school-based assessment programs and to make judgments about student achievement.
- Judgments about the quality of student achievement are made using pre-stated standards described in syllabuses about how well students have achieved the syllabus general objectives.
- Evidence, collected over time across a range of techniques and contexts, is used to make judgments about students’ levels of achievement.

1.5 A–Z of Senior Moderation

Policies, protocols, procedures and strategies that underpin externally moderated school-based assessment are described in detail in the QCAA publication: the A–Z of Senior Moderation. The Authority handbook is a guide to the documents in the A–Z of Senior Moderation. Documents relevant to each particular phase and process of moderation are divided into four sections:

- **Policies** are the overarching statements that govern the approaches for achieving the moderation and quality-assurance goals.
- **Protocols** are a set of rules that govern the appropriate ways of implementing the policies.
- **Procedures** are the course of action for implementing the policies.
- **Strategies** are the particular ways in which policies, protocols and procedures are enacted.

Relevant resources are referred to throughout this handbook. Where these resources reference particular policies, protocols, procedures and strategies, these documents are in the *A–Z of Senior Moderation*.²

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² QCAA (2010), *A–Z of Senior Moderation*, Brisbane, QCAA.  
2 Externally moderated school-based assessment

The collaborative relationship and partnership between schools and the QCAA is renewed annually through schools’ completion of the Form A1. The Form A1 details the roles and responsibilities of schools and the QCAA including those related to Authority moderation processes and the maintenance and support of the panel system. The moderation partnership begins with the development of Authority syllabuses.

The QCAA develops, reviews and approves syllabuses for Authority subjects for the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). Senior syllabuses form the basis for the preparation of work programs by schools.

School work programs detail the mandatory aspects of syllabuses and the significant aspects of schools’ courses of study selected from the choices permitted by each syllabus.

Teachers assess student work and determine levels of achievement according to standards descriptors outlined in the subject syllabus.

2.1 School-based assessment

Schools provide learning experiences and assessment opportunities for their students based on work programs approved by the QCAA. Schools are responsible for setting up appropriate accountable processes and procedures for assessing student achievement and communicating these processes and procedures to students.

2.1.1 School moderators

The school principal (or nominee), acting as the school moderator:

- ensures that implementation of assessment and judgments of standards within the school are consistent with the procedures outlined in this handbook
- is responsible for the:
  - total assessment program in the school
  - moderation processes within the school.

2.1.2 Subject moderators

Within each school, subject moderators (subject teachers, subject coordinators or heads of department) are directly responsible for:

- preparing and implementing work programs
- ensuring the use of assessment standards are consistent with syllabus standards descriptors
- organising internal subject moderation processes where these are required
- preparing external moderation submissions.
2.1.3 Teachers

Within each subject, teachers are responsible for:

- designing and delivering learning experiences and assessment opportunities for their students based on their school’s QCAA-approved work program
- assessing student work using relevant syllabus standards descriptors
- determining levels of achievement using syllabus:
  - standards descriptors
  - principles of exit assessment
  - determining exit levels of achievement
- recording achievement on a student profile.

2.1.4 School documentation

Schools develop policies for implementation of their assessment programs and related matters. These are published as school documents and are made known to students and parents/carers.

Relevant resources

- Moderation policies:
  - Late and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
  - Special provisions for school-based assessments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
  - Using standards to make judgments about student achievement in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
- Moderation strategies:
  - Authenticating student work
  - Developing a school-based policy for late and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments.

2.2 External moderation

Assessment in Authority subjects is externally moderated. The QCAA, through state and district review panels, operates quality-assurance procedures, approval of work programs, monitoring of standards of assessment, reviewing (verification and confirmation) of proposed levels of achievement before certification of results, and random sampling of student folios after certification.

The following diagram summarises the Queensland system of externally moderated school-based assessment.
Diagram 1: The moderation process

QCAA

Phase 1: Syllabus development
Committees develop syllabuses for QCAA approval

Phase 2: Work program approval
District review panels ensure that work programs meet syllabus requirements

Schools

Schools write work programs

Phase 3: Monitoring
District review panels provide advice to schools about course implementation based on samples of Year 11 work

Schools teach and assess students according to their approved work program

Phase 4: Verification
District review panels verify schools’ judgments of student achievements

Schools apply panel advice

Phase 5: Comparability
State review panels ensure judgments are comparable across the state

Schools respond to panel advice

Disagreement?

State panel arbitrates

Phase 6: Confirmation
QCAA checks school results and confirms levels of achievement

Phase 7: Random sampling
QCAA quality assures the process by randomly sampling student folios

Student outcomes
Exit levels of achievement awarded
2.2.1 Sampling

External moderation in Queensland is based on the practice of sampling school assessment decisions. Sampling requirements differ depending on the phases of moderation but the principle remains the same; groups of teachers trained as reviewers meet formally to provide advice to schools about:

- the effectiveness of schools’ assessment programs in terms of the provision of opportunities to demonstrate:
  - coverage of the syllabus general objectives and mandatory aspects
  - syllabus standards descriptors
- the appropriateness of school judgments about the matching of the qualities of students’ responses with the syllabus standards descriptors.

Schools select folios of particular students to submit as samples of school judgments of student achievement. At monitoring, the required folios are typical standards within an interim level of achievement. At verification, the required folios are typical and threshold standards within a proposed level of achievement.

2.2.2 Use of evidence by panels

Review panels look for evidence to support school judgments about student responses in sample folios at monitoring and verification and student folios at exit. Judgments about student achievement have already been made by teachers in schools. Panels do not make judgments about student work but seek to support judgments already made by looking for the match of school decisions with the evidence of level of achievement decisions that the school presents.

When reviewing sample folios, review panels look for evidence to support school judgments. Panels use evidence to provide advice and recommendations to schools. Advice will be about the assessment program and the school judgments as demonstrated in the folios of student responses submitted as samples.

2.2.3 Use of panel advice and recommendations by schools

Schools receive advice and recommendations from review panels following moderation meetings. Advice will be about the assessment program and the school judgments as demonstrated in the folios of student responses submitted as samples. It is then the responsibility of schools to consider the extent to which there are implications in terms of opportunities, judgments and decisions for the whole cohort, sample and non-sample student folios.

2.2.4 Reliability and validity

Any system of high-stakes assessment must demonstrate that it is reliable and that it validly assesses what it was designed to assess. Reliability and validity are best demonstrated when student results between schools are comparable. Research and studies have shown that externally moderated school-based assessment exhibits these crucial qualities of reliability and validity.
Reliability

Inter-marker reliability

Research conducted by Masters and McBryde in 1994 looked at a sample of 546 Queensland students’ assessment folios in English, Mathematics, Chemistry and Modern History. The folios were rated independently by different sets of two markers under different sets of conditions. The results revealed a very high level of comparability and inter-marker agreement of 94 per cent (Masters & McBryde 1994, p. 32). When compared with studies undertaken in other Australian states at the time, including results from external examination markers, Masters and McBryde (1994, p. vi–vii) concluded the Queensland data revealed significantly higher levels of agreement.

Consistency of teacher judgments

Since 1994, the QCAA has conducted a longitudinal study through the process of random sampling. Randomly selected student folios are independently reviewed each year and the results are analysed as a measure of comparability within the system. While data may vary from year to year, the rate of agreement in the assignment of levels of achievement over the course of the study has been better than 85%. This represents a high level of consistency of teacher judgments in terms of the five broad levels of achievement.

Validity

A range of studies has demonstrated the validity of the Queensland assessment system. In particular, these studies have considered how school-based assessment allows for more authentic assessment through the alignment of what is taught, learnt and assessed with syllabus general objectives and standards descriptors. Studies that have examined aspects of the validity of Queensland assessment practices include the following:

- Matters, Pitman and O’Brien (1998) established strong evidence of authenticity of assessment through links made between syllabus objectives and assessment criteria and the abundance of information used in making decisions regarding student achievement.
- Cumming, Wyatt-Smith, Elkins and Neville (2006) found that the model of externally moderated school-based assessment is based on the assumption that teachers are in the best position to make valid and reliable judgments about the achievements of students.
- Sadler (1998, 2009), by disclosing criteria and standards, and ensuring that the decision-making underpinning teacher judgments is visible to students and understood by students, the locus of control for learning can move more effectively from the teacher to the student and can empower students in terms of their own learning.
3 Moderation processes

3.1 Syllabus development

Syllabuses are developed by the QCAA in collaboration with Learning Area Reference Committees (LARCs) made up of practising teachers, academics and curriculum experts, and supported by writing teams of subject experts. Schools contribute to the development of new syllabuses through feedback to draft versions posted on the QCAA’s website, or the participation of teachers as subject experts on the committee that wrote the syllabus.

Before schools begin to teach using a new syllabus, the QCAA provides syllabus implementation workshops that outline the key aspects of that syllabus. This professional development will include outlining the key aspects of the syllabus:

- **general objectives** for a four-semester course of study that state what students should know and be able to do by the end of Year 12
- **subject matter** to be taught to students, including core and mandatory requirements
- **assessment advice** and requirements for achieving the general objectives and demonstrating exit standards
- **standards descriptors** that are used to make judgments about how well students have achieved the general objectives by the end of Year 12.

These workshops occur the year before a syllabus is to be implemented. After attending such a workshop, teachers then develop the relevant school work program for the following year.

3.2 Work program approval

Using the syllabus and the relevant work program requirements, schools write work programs that show how they intend to implement the syllabus. A work program must include:

- a **course organisation** consistent with the syllabus and suited to the particular needs of students in a school — schools would consider their students, location and available resources, and write a program appropriate to these conditions
- **intended student learning** indicating learning experiences selected by a school
- an **assessment program** with the required number of assessment instruments and range and breadth of assessment techniques.

A work program provides:

- guidance to teachers about how the course will be delivered and assessed based on the school’s interpretation of the syllabus
- guidance to students and their parents about the subject matter to be studied and how achievement of the syllabus objectives will be assessed
- the basis for QCAA approval for the purposes of certifying students’ results for the subject.

Review panels provide recommendations to the QCAA about the suitability of a work program for approval. These recommendations are communicated to schools on the Form R2 and may include aspects of their program that require further consideration if a school’s work program is not approved.

Work program approval process occurs through the WPOnline web database.
3.3 Monitoring

Monitoring is the process by which review panels consider a school’s implementation of a course and assessment decisions in subjects after approximately half of the course of study has been completed.

Schools select five folios of student work for all Authority subjects offered at the school. Typically, one folio for each proposed interim level of achievement is submitted. At the monitoring meeting, a review panel of teachers trained by the QCAA will provide advice to each school about:

- implementation of the relevant Senior Syllabus
- effectiveness of assessment instruments in offering students opportunities to demonstrate syllabus general objectives and standards
- the school’s matching of the appropriate standards descriptors with the qualities of student work based on evidence in the sample folios
- interim levels of achievement decisions.

The school then considers that advice when implementing the work program, developing effective assessment instruments and making judgments.

Observers

At monitoring meetings

A school may request that a teacher be allowed to attend a monitoring meeting as an observer. A limit is placed on the number of observers attending any particular meeting. All requests to observe at a monitoring meeting must be sent to the relevant district office through the school moderator according to timelines set by the district coordinator. The reason for the request to observe must be included with the nomination. Nominations for observers will be considered by the district coordinator and the panel chair and schools are notified by the district coordinator in due course.

At verification meetings

Owing to tight timelines and the importance of the process of verification, observers are not permitted at verification meetings.
3.4 Verification

Verification is the process by which review panels advise schools about Year 12 student achievement relative to syllabus standards descriptors.

Prior to the end of the course of study, schools prepare and send their verification submission to be reviewed by the district review panel. It is at this point in the process that schools will receive advice about the appropriateness of interim levels of achievement decisions relative to syllabus standards descriptors. For verification, each school selects a representative sample of nine folios of student work. Typically, up to five folios at mid-range for each level of achievement and four folios at thresholds, including the top-placed student, will be sent for review.

QCAA review panels will provide advice to schools about:

- interim level of achievement decisions
- the appropriateness of schools’ judgments about student responses to assessment instruments relative to the syllabus standards descriptors
- the effectiveness of assessment in providing opportunities for students to demonstrate the syllabus general objectives across the range of standards
- coverage of the course as demonstrated by evidence in the verification submission.

The school then considers panel advice and recommendations about sample folios when making subsequent decisions about achievement for all students in the cohort, sample and non-sample.

Relevant resources

- Moderation protocols:
  - Appropriate materials for submissions of student work
  - Atypical sample folios
  - Form R6 Advice
  - Using evidence to make judgments about student achievement
- Moderation procedure:
  - Revisiting semesters and undertaking additional assessment in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
  - Shared campus arrangements
  - Variable progression rate
  - Verification and exit for review panel chairs’ school submissions
  - Verification for discontinued students
  - Visa school reviews
  - Year 12 students completing the first one or two semesters of a senior subject
- Moderation strategies:
  - Atypical sample folios
3.4.1 Unresolved submissions

Where agreement between a school and a district review panel concerning the levels of achievement for Authority subjects is not reached by the date set down for reaching agreement after verification, the state review panel is to assume responsibility for the verification and the Fax Form R7 exit consultations. The school must send the submission to QCAA district offices for review at the state review panel comparability meeting.

The state review panel makes recommendations about the decisions made by the school, based upon the evidence in the verification submission and any extra evidence that may have been provided in subsequent negotiations with the district review panel chair (DRPC) or further information that the school considers may be helpful to the state panel in supporting their submission.

The state review panel then negotiates with the school. These negotiations are to be completed by a date specified in the QCAA memorandum.

Relevant resources

- Moderation protocols: Unresolved submissions.

3.5 Comparability

Comparability is the process by which state panels look for evidence that judgments about student achievement using standards across districts in the state are comparable. State panels look at sample folios for all Authority subjects across all levels of achievement from each district to ensure that the standards are being consistently implemented.

This allows the school and the community to be confident that, for example, a Very High Achievement (VHA) awarded in a subject at one school is comparable to a VHA awarded by other schools offering the same subject.

Relevant resources

- Moderation protocols:
  - Comparability
  - Resolution of unresolved submissions from state review panel comparability meetings.
3.6 Confirmation

3.6.1 Determining the exit levels of achievement

Schools use syllabus exit standards descriptors to make decisions about overall achievement for each student across the range of summative assessment instruments towards the end of the course. These decisions are on-balance judgments about how the qualities of student work best match the standards descriptors across each dimension.

On completion of a senior secondary course of study, schools award one of five levels of achievement (LOA):

- Very High Achievement (VHA)
- High Achievement (HA)
- Sound Achievement (SA)
- Limited Achievement (LA)
- Very Limited Achievement (VLA).

Relevant resources

- Moderation policy: Using standards to make judgments about student achievement
- Moderation protocol: Using evidence to make judgments about student achievement
- Moderation strategies: Making judgments about student achievement
- Senior syllabus: Determining exit levels of achievement/Principles of exit assessment.

3.6.2 Confirmation of exit levels of achievement

Prior to exit, schools may consult with review panel chairs (RPCs) about awarding exit levels of achievement based on additional evidence of student achievement collected in assessment completed between verification and exit.

Schools decide about the need for formal consultation with review panel chairs about proposed changes to an agreed-to exit distribution. Decisions to consult are based on the significance of the changes to distribution and relative achievement between the agreed verification proposal and the exit proposal. Schools initiate consultation using the fax Form R7.

The RPC will consider the requested changes and the evidence on which proposed changes are based. The RPC’s decision to approve or not approve changes will be communicated to the school through the Form R7.

Relevant resources

- Moderation protocol: Consultation and negotiation
- Moderation protocol: Form R7 exit consultations
- Moderation strategies: Using the Form R7.
3.6.3 Checking procedures

Prior to the awarding of the QCE and the issuing of the senior statement, officers of the QCAA confirm schools’ exit proposals. This involves:

- checking that exit proposals and the relative distribution of cohorts are consistent with panel advice recorded on the Form R6 and, where relevant, the Form R7
- reconciling school data with the exit proposal
- negotiating with schools, where necessary, about the final distribution of levels of achievement.

The administrative arrangements for checking are detailed in the relevant QCAA memorandum.

3.7 Random sampling

Random sampling is a quality-assurance process designed to provide information about the comparability of final exit level of achievement decisions. This process occurs after a course is completed.

Each year the QCAA takes a stratified random sample of finalised Year 12 folios from schools across the state and sends them for review to panels from different districts. A report on the random sampling process is published annually on the QCAA website.

4 Administrative arrangements

4.1 Typical procedures

4.1.1 Group size

Administrative arrangements for some moderation processes can vary depending on the number of students in a subject cohort and the OP eligibility of those students. Group sizes are as follows:

- **Large** groups consist of 14 or more OP-eligible students.
- **Intermediate** groups consist of 10 to 13 OP-eligible students.
- **Small** groups consist of 9 or less OP-eligible students.

4.1.2 Monitoring

Schools prepare monitoring submissions, accompanied by a *Form R3: Year 11 Monitoring*, for consideration by district or state review panels. All submissions are sent to review panels via the local QCAA district office. After the monitoring meetings, submissions are returned to schools accompanied by the originals of the Form R3 with comments and advice from review panels.
Timelines for monitoring

Submissions are due at QCAA district offices in the final week of each school year, except in the case of extension subjects. The QCAA informs schools by memorandum of the due date and the contents of submissions for monitoring meetings.

Monitoring meetings are convened early in the following year, usually in the third week of February. Monitoring meetings for extension subjects are usually convened mid-year.

Advice on schools’ submissions is provided to schools immediately after the meeting.

Requirements for a monitoring submission

A monitoring submission should include:

- a Form R3 completed in the appropriate places, to include:
  - identification of the school, syllabus, subject number, panel code and QCAA district
  - the number of students in the cohort
  - the sample folios identified as high, mid or threshold within LOA and lettered A to E
  - the signature of the principal or the school moderator
- a copy of the school’s approved work program (with Form R2 attached)
- copies of assessment instruments with attachments where required or appropriate (e.g. some syllabuses require an anticipated response indicating a match with the criteria sheet)
- five sample student folios whose responses demonstrate standards that are typical of the particular level of achievement. If there are more than five students in the cohort:
  - include the folios of students whose achievement is closest to the middle of each level of achievement in which students have been placed.
  - where there are no students achieving one or more of the levels of achievement, include the folio/s of the student/s:
    - closest to the middle of the levels of achievement
    - top of the cohort
    - other folios until five samples have been included
- where there are fewer than five students, all folios must be sent
- other evidence and/or documentation that may not be associated with a sample folio but provides information to support decisions about practical or non-written responses.

Schools should provide written advice in the submission when the requirements for a monitoring submission will not be met.

Each of the sample folios should:

- be clearly labelled with a letter code (A–E)
- contain student responses to assessment instruments that have been used to make the interim level of achievement judgment
- have the relevant assessment instrument and criteria sheet attached to each of the responses
- include a completed student profile.
4.1.3 Verification

Schools prepare verification submissions, accompanied by a Form R6: *Year 12 Levels of Achievement: School proposal*, for consideration by district or state review panels. The Form R6 is considered the most important accountability document in the moderation process. The form is in quadruplicate so that the history of decisions, consultation and negotiations, and confirmation of exit levels of achievement are captured and retained for later reference. At the completion of confirmation processes the original page of the quadruplicate Form R6 is retained by the QCAA as a record of the processes of moderation.

All submissions are sent to the review panel via the QCAA district office. After the verification meetings, submissions are:

- returned to schools accompanied by the originals and duplicates of the Form R6 with recommendations and advice from review panels; or
- retained, in some cases, for a short time for sampling by the state review panel for the purposes of comparability. The school is notified of this and the Form R6 is returned to the school. A photocopy of the Form R6 accompanies the submission to the state review panel comparability meeting.

Timelines for verification

Submissions are due at QCAA district offices in the first week of the fourth school term except in the case of extension subjects which occur later than this. The QCAA notifies schools by memorandum of the due date for, and the contents of, submissions.

Verification meetings are convened on the third Monday of the fourth school term except in the case of extension subjects which are convened later than this.

Advice on schools' judgments about students' achievement is provided to schools immediately after the meeting.

After verification meetings, consultations and negotiations between review panels and schools occur within very tight timelines. The QCAA notifies schools by memorandum of the specified date for concluding negotiations with district review panels.

In the same way, when schools are required to negotiate with state review panels, the QCAA notifies schools by memorandum of the specified date for reaching agreement.

Requirements for a verification submission

A verification submission should include:

- a Form R6 completed in the appropriate places, to include:
  - identification of the school, syllabus, subject number, panel code and QCAA district
  - in the ‘Initial’ column of the relative achievement section:
    - all students in each level of achievement in the subject cohort who will be eligible to receive a Senior statement at the end of the year and have, or will have, completed 1, 2, 3 or 4 semester units of study in the subject
    - the appropriate placement of all students in each level of achievement in the subject cohort
    - the sample folios identified as high, mid or threshold within LOA and lettered A to I/J
− in the Distributions of level of achievement 'Initial school proposal' row, the number of students in each level of achievement and the total number of students
− the signature of the principal or the school moderator.

• a copy of the school’s approved work program with the Form R2 attached
• copies of assessment instruments including conditions, with attachments where required or appropriate (e.g. some syllabuses require an anticipated response indicating a match with the criteria sheet)
• sample student folios whose responses demonstrate standards that are typical of the standard at the particular level required. A minimum of nine student folios must be included irrespective of the size of the Year 12 subject-group, except where there are fewer than nine students in the subject cohort (or where the subject is English Extension which requires five sample folios)

• if there are more than nine students in the subject cohort, sample folios of:
  − the top student in the cohort
  − the student who is placed closest to the middle of each level of achievement (mid-range sample)
  − the student who is placed closest to the lower threshold of all levels (threshold samples) except VLA

• if there are more than nine students in the subject-group but there are no students achieving one or more of the five levels of achievement, sample folios of:
  − the top student in the cohort
  − the student who is placed closest to the middle of each level of achievement (mid-range sample)
  − the student who is placed closest to the lower threshold of the level (threshold samples) except VLA
  − other students until at least nine folios have been included; these other folios are to be selected, where possible, from those students who are placed in the VHA, HA and SA bands
• other evidence and/or documentation as required by the syllabus such as recorded evidence of practical or spoken responses not associated with a sample folio
• written advice, signed by the principal or school moderator, when the requirements for a verification submission will not be met.

Each of the sample folios should:
• be clearly labelled with a letter code (A–I/J)
• contain student responses to assessment instruments that have been used to make the interim level of achievement judgment
• have the relevant assessment instrument and criteria sheet attached to each of the responses
• include a completed student profile.
4.1.4 Variations to requirements for moderation submissions

Variations to the requirements of submissions to be sent to Authority moderation meetings may occur for a range of reasons. For example, there are requirements in some syllabuses for additional evidence from across the student cohort not specific to a sample folio; extension syllabuses are two-semester courses of study and, as such, have monitoring meetings at the end of semester one, verification meetings at the end of the course of study and have no post-verification assessment.

Schools should consult each specific syllabus to ensure that variations to typical requirements are identified and met.

Formats

Some syllabuses require the submission of evidence that may be recorded in electronic formats. Formats used in the collection of evidence to be submitted for moderation purposes should be accessible using standard equipment intended for that purpose.

Schools are able to send all or part of their submission in electronic format (such as DVDs, audiotapes, CDs) where verification folio requirements allow this. Unless the subject syllabus already requires this, the school should contact the district coordinator well before the deadline for submission.

4.1.5 Transport of submissions

When transporting a submission to moderation meetings, ensure that:

- it is securely packaged
- the school and the subject are clearly identified
- recorded evidence is placed in a sealed envelope, clearly marked and attached to the submission
- the completed and signed Form R3 or R6 as appropriate, is placed on top of each submission
- all submissions are addressed to: The District Coordinator, QCAA district office. Addresses for QCAA district offices are available on the QCAA website.

Secure transport of submissions

It is the principal’s responsibility to ensure that all submissions from the school to moderation meetings are packaged securely and sent to the QCAA district office in boxes that can be easily handled by QCAA staff. It is recommended that 10 kg is the maximum weight of a submission box.

After the moderation meeting, submissions may be dispatched from QCAA district offices and the QCAA in a variety of ways, including, by courier, registered post, a review panellist/review panel chair of the school from which the submission came. In each case, a record is kept of the name of the carrier and date that the submission was sent. The QCAA pays the cost of returning submissions to schools.

When schools dispatch submissions they should use the same levels of accountability as for delivery. The school pays the cost of sending submissions to QCAA district offices.
4.1.6 Reviewing

Reviewing pathway of a submission at a moderation meeting

- All submissions for moderation meetings are sent to the QCAA district office as required in the relevant annual memoranda. Submissions are then sent by the district coordinator to a panellist for pre-reviewing prior to the moderation meeting. All submissions must be pre-reviewed.

- The pre-reviewer checks the contents of the submission are complete using the check list (Part A). Should it be identified that the submission is not complete the panellist will use the process described on Part A to contact the district coordinator. The appropriate subsequent actions will be communicated to the panellist by the QCAA.

- The panellist will complete the pre-review using the pre-review notes (Part B).

- The pre-reviewing panellist will bring the submission and Parts A and B to the moderation meeting. At the meeting, Parts A and B are separated from the submission and both are given to the review panel chair (RPC).

- Using the Part C review notes, all submissions are independently reviewed by a second panellist at the meeting. When the review is completed, the second panellist collects the Part B review notes from the RPC and meets with the pre-reviewer. Both panellists are now able to read the other’s review notes for the first time.

- The panellists will conference about the submission and provide written advice to the RPC on the Part D consensus Form. The submission and Parts B, C and D are returned to the RPC.

- Where consensus is not reached, the panellists complete Part D by indicating the respective decisions of each of the panellists, the relevant evidence in the folio and information from the syllabus that substantiates the respective recommendations.
• The RPC will decide what actions will be subsequently taken and will manage the completion of advice to the school. This may require further reviews and conferencing.

• The RPC manages the completion of each submission and quality assures advice and recommendations to schools written as comments on the Forms R3 and R6.

4.1.7 Reaching agreement at verification

At verification, the moderation processes are the same for small, intermediate and large groups. Agreement on the Form R6 is reached when the Distribution of levels of achievement and relative achievement of students are supported by both the school and the panel.

Agreement is indicated on the Form R6 when the:

• principal and the RPC have signed and dated the Agreed Verification proposal of the Distribution of levels of achievement

• RPC has initialled the Relative achievement of students, Agreed column.

If the review panel supports the school’s judgments for all sample folios, the RPC:

• completes and initials the Agreed column

• completes the Agreed verification proposal row

• signs and dates the Agreed verification proposal row

• completes and signs the comments section of the Form R6

• retains the triplicate copy.

The school then considers the advice on the Form R6; no further action is required at verification if the review panel supports the school’s judgments.

If the review panel does not support the school’s judgments for all sample folios, the RPC:

• completes and initials the Panel column, indicating the panel’s recommendation

• provides clear, citeable evidence to support the panel’s recommendation and signs the comments section of the Form R6

• leaves the Agreed verification proposal row blank.

The Form R6 is photocopied and that copy is retained by the RPC for the purpose of consultation. All three copies of the original Form R6 are returned with the verification submission to the school.

If the review panel does not support the school’s judgments, then the school must contact the chair as soon as possible for consultation and negotiation regarding sample folios and other considerations.

If agreement is subsequently reached, the school:

• indicates in the Agreed column the agreed rung placements of the sample folios

• completes, signs and dates the Agreed Verification proposal row

• forwards the Form R6 to the RPC for signing.

When the review panel chair receives the Form R6, they:

• initial the Agreed column

• sign and date the Agreed Verification proposal

• annotate the details of consultation and negotiation on the Form R6 as appropriate in red
• retain the triplicate
• return the original and duplicate copies to the school.

If agreement is not subsequently reached (by the date indicated in the Memorandum > Forms R6 and R7 procedures following verification), the complete verification submission is to be sent immediately to the QCAA district office in time for state panel meetings.

Relevant resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderation Protocol:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– Consultation and Negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Form R6 Advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Form R7 exit consultations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation strategies: Using the Form R7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.8 Unresolved submissions

Where agreement between a school and a district review panel concerning the levels of achievement for Authority subjects is not reached, the state review panel is to assume responsibility for the verification and the Fax form R7 exit consultations. A submission for state review panel consideration is required only if agreement has not been reached with the district review panel.

Preparing a submission for state review panel consideration

The school forwards to the QCAA district office:

• the verification submission, including the Form R6, in the same form as sent to verification
• additional evidence that may have been provided in subsequent negotiation with the DRPC, or further information that the school considers may be helpful to the state panel in supporting their submission (not including post-verification student responses)
• an explanation of why it has not been possible to reach agreement with the district review panel
• any correspondence included with this material and in the submission signed by the principal of the school.

4.1.9 Reaching agreement about an unresolved submission

• Before the meeting, the DRPC provides, for the state review panel, details of the consultation and negotiation with the school.
• The state review panel conducts an independent review of the school submission.
• Following the independent review, the state review panel considers all information made available by the school and the district review panel before making a final decision.
• The state review panel then negotiates with the school. These negotiations are to be completed by a date specified in the QCAA memorandum.
4.1.10 Confirmation of Year 12 data

Completing Forms R6
At exit ensure the Form R6 is completed by:

- writing the number of students on the appropriate rung of the Exit column and identifying any sample students by a letter code (A, B, C etc.), e.g. ‘6 + B’ (= 7 students)
- identifying all OP-ineligible students and visa students in the manner indicated in the yearly memo
- the principal signing and dating the Exit proposal row.

The original copy of the completed Form R6 is sent to the QCAA with any relevant Forms R7 (Faxform) signed by the RPC attached.

Transfer students
Students who transfer between schools during Year 11 and 12 sometimes discontinue an Authority subject because the new school does not offer the subject. At exit, in such circumstances, schools need to fill in a Form R6 indicating the placement from the Form S1 and have the transfer student Form R6 signed by the principal.

Providing accurate information
Schools should ensure that the agreed distribution of levels of achievement Exit proposal row, as indicated on the Forms R6 and signed by the principal, match exactly the distribution of levels of achievement on SDCS data submissions. The distribution of levels of achievement recorded on SDCS data submissions are summarised on the school proposal summary report.

4.2 Variations to typical procedures

Schools typically offer courses of study over four consecutive semesters in Years 11 and 12. Students usually attend a single school when completing their senior phase of learning. There are variations to this pattern of engagement in schooling and these may require other procedural arrangements. These are described in this section.

4.2.1 Shared campus arrangements

A shared campus arrangement provides the opportunity for students to study an Authority subject that is not offered as part of their school’s curriculum at another school where it is offered. The school at which the student is enrolled is referred to as the base school. The school agreeing to provide the course of study is referred to as the host school.

Students studying under a shared campus arrangement are subject to particular moderation arrangements described in the A–Z of Senior Moderation.

Dual cohorts

A dual cohort exists when a student in a cohort enrolled in a school (base school) studies a subject through another school (host school) and other students in the cohort also study the subject at their school. Dual cohorts are appropriate for resolving issues that arise for small numbers of students, one or two. Such an issue might be time-tabling difficulties.

It is the responsibility of the base school to determine Subject Achievement Indicators (SAIs) for the cohort of students studying a subject based on the standards of students' work, including
students of their own school in a dual cohort situation enrolled at a host school. The base school may seek from the host school, at the completion of the course, the students’ folios of work so that appropriate SAI decisions can be made. Students’ levels of achievement from the host school should be included on the Form R6 sent at exit by the base school.

Upon receipt of the Form R6 from the host school, the base school will:

- transfer the exit information to the school’s Form R6 for that subject
- include the dual cohort students in the distribution of Levels of achievement
- attach the host school Form R6 to the back of the school Form R6.

The base and host school should inform the QCAA when a student is enrolled as part of a dual cohort. Changes to enrolments must be communicated to the QCAA.

**Recording information about student enrolment and achievement**

Information showing semesters completed, levels of achievement and results for the host school students must be entered in the base school’s SDCS.

**Tracking of students discontinuing courses**

Host schools should, upon becoming aware that a student has discontinued a course, notify the base school by sending a transfer Form S1 and note that the student is no longer enrolled in the course. That student will not be included on the host school Form R6 at verification.

As with all transfer students, it will then be the responsibility of the receiving school to ensure provision of accurate results to the QCAA via the SDCS data transfer.

**Relevant resources**

- Moderation procedure: shared campus arrangements.

### 4.2.2 Variable progression rate

The QCAA’s moderation procedures are based on students of a subject studying one semester unit of that subject in each of four consecutive semesters over a two-year period (Years 11 and 12). However, variable progression rates (VPR) allow students to receive a Senior Statement at the end of a three-year program of study or to study more than one semester unit of a subject in a single semester.

Students studying under variable progression are subject to particular moderation arrangements that are described in the *A–Z of Senior Moderation*.

**Relevant resources**

- Moderation procedure: Variable progression rate.
5 Review panels

Externally moderated school-based assessment is implemented in a partnership between schools and the QCAA. Schools agree to carry out QCAA procedures related to moderation and to make teachers available to be review panellists. The QCAA provides professional training and support for teachers who serve on review panels.

Review panels are groups of experienced educators and practising teachers who are appointed to the review panel by the QCAA to give advice to schools, in subjects within their area of expertise, about schools’ implementation of courses of study developed from Authority syllabuses and schools’ judgments about student achievement.

The QCAA does not fund schools for the release of teachers to complete their roles as review panellists.

5.1 Role of review panels

5.1.1 State review panels

The QCAA appoints state review panels usually for each Authority subject. The role of the state review panel is to:

- consider work programs recommended for approval by district review panels and either approve those work programs or provide further advice to schools through district review panels
- provide advice to district review panels and the QCAA about comparability of judgments about student achievement across QCAA districts in Queensland
- manage the negotiation and resolution of schools’ proposed levels of achievement in verification submissions when agreement was not reached at a district level at verification; and, to conduct all subsequent consultations for those submissions at exit.

5.1.2 District review panels

District review panels are established by the QCAA, usually when at least eight schools within a district teach the authority subject and enough experienced teachers are available to form a panel. If there are insufficient schools or panellists to form district review panels, the state review panel operates as both state and district review panels.

District review panels provide advice to schools and the QCAA by considering:

- work programs sent by schools for recommendation for approval
- schools’ provision of opportunity for the demonstration of the syllabus standards descriptors and the coverage of the general objectives, the appropriate matching of the syllabus standards descriptors and the qualities of student responses and interim levels of achievement decisions at monitoring
- schools’ decisions about student achievement and relative achievement at verification and through random sampling.
5.2 Roles and responsibilities of review panel members

5.2.1 Roles of state and district review panel chairs

The state review panel chair provides leadership for the state review panel and district review panel chairs. District review panel chairs, as the leaders of the district review panel, provide advice about and manage moderation processes and procedures in the context of the phases of moderation.

The panel chairs have a role to develop a shared understanding of syllabus standards and appropriate assessment decisions within the district. Panel chairs provide advice to schools on syllabus implementation and advice on matters arising from completion of moderation processes and procedures including:

- work program approval
- assessment and provision of opportunities to demonstrate syllabus standards
- judgments of the match of syllabus standards and the qualities of student responses
- reaching agreement at verification
- consultation and negotiation at exit.

The panel chairs maintain communication with the QCAA on matters arising from work program approval, monitoring and verification meetings, consultations and negotiations, and the annual moderation conference of the state review panel and district review panel chairs.

5.2.2 Responsibilities of review panel members

A review panel member is a person who:

- promotes the principles of externally moderated school-based assessment
- supports, advocates and implements a standards-based approach to assessment
- is open about the flexibility schools have to develop syllabus-based courses of study and assessment to match their unique contexts, cohorts and resources
- is able to develop syllabus standards-based positions in relation to evidence presented by schools in sample folios when conferencing
- supports and implements review panel decisions
- conducts professional conversations at moderation meetings in a respectful, confidential and collegial manner
- is constructive and diplomatic when preparing for the review panel chair comments that are used for feedback to schools
- ensures review panel confidentiality in materials viewed, discussions held and decisions made
- knows, understands and applies QCAA senior moderation policies, protocols, procedures and strategies.
5.2.3  Duties of review panel members

A review panel member is required to:

- have current and extensive knowledge of the subject area and a clear understanding of current syllabuses
- maintain currency with the procedures of work program approval, monitoring and verification
- participate in review panel training
- meet the timelines set by the QCAA for submission of their school’s work program
- meet the timelines set by the QCAA when providing advice about work programs and review submissions
- be punctual and dependable in attendance for the duration of meetings.

5.3  Staffing review panels

When casual vacancies arise on review panels, the QCAA advertises the positions and invites applications from qualified people. Application forms are available on the QCAA website. A minimum of two years teaching experience is required. All applicants are expected to have a current and extensive knowledge of the subject. Review panellists should be either currently teaching the subject or have recently taught the subject and expect to teach the subject again. Only one review panellist should be appointed per school per subject (not including the RPC).

5.3.1  Selection for state and district panels

The selection process takes into account the applicant's:

- knowledge of the subject area
- commitment to and support of the philosophy of moderated school-based assessment
- recent involvement in developing an approved work program in the subject
- willingness to accept a flexible approach to syllabus interpretation and work program development
- knowledge of and ability to apply QCAA policies and procedures related to work program approval, monitoring and verification
- willingness to accept, support and implement review panel decisions
- ability to maintain confidentiality
- availability for regular review panel meetings and review panel training
- organisational skills.

State panels

Where possible, state review panels consist of:

- teachers of the subject
- a person from a tertiary institution who is involved in the area of study
Selection and appointments to review panels

- The process of selection and appointment for:
  - state review panels is undertaken by staff at the QCAA
  - district review panels is undertaken by district coordinators, each district principals’ committee and staff of the QCAA.

- Appointments to review panels are provisional until the review panellist is credentialed.

- Recommendations for review panel chair and state review panellists are approved by the deputy director.

Procedures for panel rollover

The following guidelines apply to review panel rollover for syllabuses in general implementation:

- where panel membership has remained largely unchanged for a significant period of time, panel rollover may occur
- during rollover all positions are declared vacant and a new selection process occurs
- the review panel chair should be changed after two terms of six years
- approximately one third of the members should be changed in each rollover.

Credentialing of review panel members

Credentialing is a means of strengthening the moderation process by maintaining experienced and expert review panels and a way of recognising the contribution and commitment of review panellists to the process. Credentials are awarded by the QCAA.

The process of credentialling

Credentialling is a process in which review panellists demonstrate that they have:

- participated in review panel training
- written or been involved in the writing of an approved work program
- provided high-quality advice to the review panel about work programs
- provided high-quality advice to the review panel about standards
- kept to moderation timelines
- attended review panel meetings regularly and punctually
- respected the confidential nature of review panel discussions and decisions.

Credentials remain current for the period of syllabus implementation unless it becomes clear that a review panellist is not able to maintain or sustain the conditions of the credential. Credentials may be withdrawn after a process of review and consultation.

5.3.2 Professional development of review panels

The QCAA provides training for review panels to enable panellists to provide quality advice about work programs, monitoring and verification.

The support provided to review panels varies according to the stage of syllabus implementation. Panel support may take various forms including meetings, media products and on-line support.
### Relevant resources

- **Moderation policy:**
  - Using standards to make judgments about student achievement

- **Moderation protocols:**
  - Consultation and negotiation
  - Form R3 Advice
  - Form R6 Advice
  - State review panel chairs and members visiting district review panels at monitoring or verification
  - State review panel report
  - Using evidence to make judgments about student achievement

- **Moderation procedures:**
  - Verification and exit procedures for review panel chairs’ school submissions
  - Moderation strategies:
    - Atypical sample folios
    - Form R3 Advice
    - Form R6 Advice.
  - Making judgments about student achievement
  - Using the Form R7

- **Panellist information**

- **QCAA Code of conduct**

- **QCAA Assessment Glossary**

- **P–12 Assessment and moderation resources**

- **P–12 Assessment policy**

- **P–12 Assessment overview**

- **State review panel and random sampling reports.**

### 6 Other relevant documents

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the following QCAA publications:

- **A–Z of Senior Moderation:**
  

- **Designing effective assessment:**
  

- **QCAA senior syllabuses at:**
  

- **School-based assessment — the Queensland system:**
  
7 Bibliography


