Quality assurance of Authority-registered subjects and short courses

Handbook

February 2017
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Queensland teachers use the processes and requirements outlined in syllabuses and Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) documents to design school-based assessment programs and make judgments about standards achieved by their students, including summative judgments for reporting purposes.

In order to ensure that the levels of achievement in Authority-registered subjects and QCAA-approved short courses match requirements, a quality assurance process is followed.

Schools do this in partnership with the QCAA, the statutory body responsible for managing Queensland’s system of externally moderated school-based assessment and senior secondary certification. The maintenance and continual improvement of the school’s quality management system ensures the reliability of judgments about student achievement.

In this document, SAS refers to both study area specifications and subject area syllabuses.

1.2 Purpose

This handbook provides information about the quality assurance process phases and procedures for the moderation and quality assurance of student achievement in Authority-registered subjects and short courses.

1.3 Scope

This handbook describes the:

- principles of externally moderated school-based assessment
- quality assurance process for Authority-registered subjects and short courses.

1.4 Principles

Authority-registered subjects are developed from SASs and contribute towards the award of a level of achievement for the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) in the senior phase of learning.

Short course subjects are syllabuses that can be used by schools to develop a one-semester course of study. A successfully completed short course contributes one credit towards the award of the QCE.

Teachers use SAS and short course documents to design teaching, learning and school-based assessment programs and to make judgments about student achievement.

Judgments about the quality of student achievement are made using defined standards that describe how well students have achieved the syllabus dimensions and objectives.

Evidence, collected over the senior phase of learning across a range of techniques and contexts, is used to make judgments about students’ levels of achievement.
1.5 Authority-registered subjects

Authority-registered subjects generally include substantial vocational and practical components. Most subjects contribute towards the award of a level of achievement for the QCE\(^1\). Results in Authority-registered subjects are not used in the calculation of OPs and FPs.

SASs are curriculum design documents from which schools develop courses of study. The flexibility of SASs enables a range of possible course structures.

1.6 Short courses

QCAA-approved short courses are one-semester courses developed to meet a specific curriculum need. Results in these subjects are not used in the calculation of OPs and FPs.

Schools use short course syllabuses to develop courses of study for students in Years 10–12. The short course is a minimum of one semester in length.

There are currently three short courses available:

- Career Development: a short course senior syllabus (2010)
- Literacy: a short course senior syllabus (2010)

Students who complete the short course at a Sound Achievement level or better will be awarded one credit towards the QCE.

In addition, students successfully completing the Literacy or Numeracy short courses meet the corresponding literacy or numeracy requirements for the awarding of the QCE.

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\(^1\) Functional English and Functional Mathematics do not contribute to the QCE, and therefore do not go through all the phases of quality assurance.
2 Externally moderated school-based assessment

Schools prepare study plans for Authority-registered subjects and short courses by drawing on the relevant QCAA syllabus document: the SAS or short course syllabus.

A school study plan demonstrates how the school plans to implement a course of study selected from the choices permitted by each syllabus. The study plan must include the study area core, the course organisation and the assessment program to be followed.

Teachers implement the course of study, assess student work and determine levels of achievement according to standards descriptors outlined in the SAS or short course syllabus.

2.1 External moderation

Assessment in Authority-registered subjects and short courses is externally moderated. The QCAA implements the quality assurance process in collaboration with schools through the approval of study plans, moderation of standards of assessment, gathering of information from internal reviews, and by conducting external reviews of the school’s quality management systems.

2.2 School-based assessment

Schools provide learning experiences and assessment opportunities for their students based on study plans 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.

School roles in the quality assurance process

School moderators

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

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

Subject moderators

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

- preparing and implementing study plans
- ensuring the use of assessment standards that are consistent with standards descriptors in the current syllabus
- organising internal subject moderation processes where these are required
- conducting internal reviews and preparing external review submissions
- implementing recommendations of external reviews and moderation meetings.
Teachers

Within each subject, teachers are responsible for:

- designing and delivering learning experiences and assessment opportunities for their students based on their school’s approved study plan
- assessing student work using relevant standards descriptors from the current SAS or short course syllabus
- determining levels of achievement using:
  - exit standards stated in the standards matrix in the current SAS or short course syllabus
  - the relevant SAS table for awarding exit levels of achievement
- recording achievement on a student profile.

School documentation

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

Student folios

A student folio of work in a SAS subject or a short course is the collection of evidence of student achievement. The school’s decision about levels of achievement in these courses of study is based on evidence in the student folio.

Each student folio should contain responses to a variety of assessment instruments as outlined in the assessment section of a school’s approved study plan. This student folio will be the evidence that demonstrates student achievement based on the match to the standards of the SAS subject or short course.

Authority-registered subjects

Schools are required to:

- collect evidence of achievement for all SASs offered by the school
- retain the evidence of student achievement for every student in the current cohort
- present sample folios for review at moderation meetings, internal reviews and external reviews.

Short courses

Schools are required to:

- collect evidence of achievement for all short courses offered by the school
- retain the evidence of student achievement (a folio that contains all work to date and may include Year 10 and/or Year 11 work) for every student in the current Year 12 cohort
- provide, for an external review, one such sample student folio for each year since the previous external review, for each short course offered.
2.3 Resources

- The *A–Z of Senior Moderation* is available from the Senior moderation hub > Handbooks: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/10773.html. Note particularly:
  - Moderation policy: Late and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
  - Moderation policy: Special provisions for school-based assessments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
  - Moderation policy: Using standards to make judgments about student achievement in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
  - Moderation protocol: Revisiting semesters and undertaking additional assessment in Authority and Authority-registered subjects
  - Moderation protocol: Using evidence to make judgments about student achievement
  - Moderation strategy: Authenticating authorship of student responses
  - Moderation strategy: Making judgments when student authorship cannot be authenticated
  - Moderation strategy: Developing a school-based policy for late and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments.

- SASs and short course syllabuses are available in the Senior secondary section of the website: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/670.html. Each subject has its own page with a range of related resources.

- Moderation resources are available from the Senior moderation hub > Resources: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/2130.html. Note particularly:
  - Internal professional development: Assessment design
  - Internal professional development: Quality-assuring assessment instruments.
3 The quality assurance process

3.1 The phases of quality assurance

There are four phases in the quality assurance process for Authority-registered subjects, three of which also apply to short courses:

- study plans
- internal reviews
- moderation meetings (Authority-registered subjects only)
- external reviews.

The four phases of the quality assurance process are interrelated and provide junctures for feedback and advice for the school’s internal quality management system.

Diagram 1: The phases of quality assurance

Authority-registered subjects
- schools develop plans from SASs
- schools submit plans to QCAA using WPOnline or the School Portal
- QCAA approval advice is provided in Forms R10 or via the School Portal
- conducted annually by schools for each subject using internal review report template
- report used at future internal and external reviews

Short course subjects
- schools develop plans from short course syllabuses
- schools review using a self-check process
- QCAA checks plans at external reviews
- all subjects in each school reviewed twice in a six-year cycle
- QCAA feedback provided in external review report
- may trigger a focused external review in the following year

Authority-registered subjects only
- each subject moderated every second year
- QCAA feedback provided in Forms R12
3.2 School requirements

Schools are required to deliver and assess the courses of study in accordance with QCAA policies and procedures. For student achievement to contribute to the QCE, courses must be quality assured.

When implementing the student achievement quality assurance process for Authority-registered subjects and short courses, schools must meet the following three requirements:

1. **partnership with the QCAA** — schools must retain evidence to demonstrate that it is working with the QCAA in the process of quality assuring student achievement

2. **regulation of student achievement** — the school’s delivery and assessment of an approved SAS or short course of study must follow guidelines set out in this handbook

3. **continual improvement** — schools must review their quality management processes and act on advice from moderation meetings and external reviews to implement strategies for continual improvement for the delivery, assessment and recording of results for Authority-registered subjects and short courses.

3.3 Study plans

**Purpose**

A **study plan** is the school’s plan of how the course of study will be delivered and assessed based on a SAS or short course syllabus. It allows for the special characteristics of the school, its resources and its students.

Schools record their plan to implement a SAS or a short course in a **study plan template**.

**Study plan approval**

**Authority-registered subjects**

For each SAS, schools submit their study plan through either WPOnline (Group A SASs) or the School Portal (Group B SASs).

Schools receive a Form R10 when a Group A SAS study plan is approved. A copy of the Form R10 is attached to the approved study plan for moderation meetings and external reviews.

Group B SAS study plans do not require a Form R10. The QCAA reviewing officer’s name and date of approval on the cover page will indicate that the study plan has been approved.

Schools may amend a study plan for a SAS at any time and resubmit this for approval.

**Short courses**

Study plans for short courses are not submitted for approval, but need to be included in the documentation for internal and external reviews. Before a course can be offered, schools must complete **Section 3: School self-check for readiness to offer the course** of the short course study plan in the affirmative. The review process will involve confirmation of the responses to this self-check form.

**QCAA resources**

- Study plan templates, requirements and examples are available from Senior secondary > A–Z subject list > individual subject page: [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/670.html](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/670.html)
- Form R10 sample is available from Senior moderation hub > Forms: [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/1426.html](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/1426.html)
3.4 Internal reviews

**Purpose**

The **internal review** is a process used by schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their quality management systems for Authority-registered subjects and short courses.

**Focus**

When undertaking internal reviews, schools focus on the requirements for the quality assurance process detailed in Section 3.2 School requirements:

1. partnership with the QCAA
2. regulation of student achievement
3. continual improvement.

The school’s documents used to define and direct the quality assurance of student achievement should be aligned to the SAS and short course documents and QCAA policies.

**Guidelines**

The internal review is:

- conducted annually by the school
- focused on the requirements for the quality assurance of student achievement
- based on the feedback received on the Form R12 from moderation meetings and the external review report, and judgments made about short courses
- focused on identifying and implementing strategies for continual improvement
- documented in the **Annual internal review report**
- retained for the next internal review, and external review by the QCAA.

**Procedures**

Schools will:

- complete all sections of the internal review report template for each SAS and short course offered
- develop strategies to respond to issues identified at moderation meetings and external reviews
- implement strategies for continual improvement
- document evidence of strategies implemented
- maintain evidence for the next external review
- maintain a student’s folio, for each short course, as evidence that syllabus standards have been used to make judgments about student achievement, and ensure that the report is signed by the principal.
Citable evidence

Citable evidence is the record of school actions in the quality assurance process. Examples of citable evidence include but are not limited to:

- records of internal moderation or peer moderation
- meeting minutes and agendas
- assessment instruments that have been refined
- Form R12 feedback from recent moderation meetings
- feedback and advice from a recent external review
- standards matrixes or criteria sheets that have been rewritten to align with syllabus standards
- internal moderation activities that have been undertaken.

QCAA resources

- Study plan templates, requirements and examples are available from Senior secondary > A–Z subject list > individual subject page: [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/670.html](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/670.html)
- Moderation forms are available from the Senior moderation hub > Forms: [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/1426.html](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/1426.html)
  - Internal review report template
  - Sample completed internal review report
  - Form R12: Sample

### 3.5 Moderation meetings

**Purpose**

Moderation meetings are part of the quality assurance process for Authority-registered subjects (no meetings are held for short courses). They provide feedback to schools about their implementation and assessment of Authority-registered subjects, and involve peer reviews of sample student folios.

**Focus**

Moderation meetings focus on the:

- implementation of the course of study
- effectiveness of the assessment program
- evidence that the dimensions/criteria and standards of the Authority-registered subject have been used to inform school judgments about student achievement.
Guidelines

- Moderation meetings are held each year
- Each Authority-registered subject is moderated every second year
- Schools are notified of the details and requirements for moderation meetings through a memo
- Participation in moderation meetings is mandatory for all schools with a Year 12 cohort enrolled in the Authority-registered subject
- Meetings involve peer review of the school submission and aim to support schools in making judgments about student achievement based on the evidence in sample folios
- Online moderation may be offered to:
  - remote schools
  - some districts where few schools offer a particular Authority-registered subject
- Schools receive feedback from meetings about judgments of achievement for the current cohort of students on the Form R12.

School submissions

For each Authority-registered subject, the school provides one submission with two sample folios. The teacher of the current cohort takes the submission to the meeting. The submission should contain:

- a completed moderation meeting submission coversheet
- the school’s approved study plan and Form R10 for English Communication, Prevocational Mathematics and Group A Authority-registered subjects OR the school’s approved study plan indicating on the front cover the name of the QCAA reviewing officer and the date of approval for Group B Authority-registered subjects
- clean assessment instruments and instrument-specific standards matrixes or criteria sheets
- two sample folios of current Year 12 students that match the interim levels of achievement specified in the moderation meetings memo
  - folios to include evidence of student work from Year 11 and Year 12 Semester 1 to date, together with up-to-date student profiles that indicate an interim level of achievement.

Form R12

The Form R12 is an electronic report from the moderation meeting and provides advice to schools. Schools do not need to complete a Form R12 before the moderation meetings.

The Form R12 is:

- initiated and completed by QCAA officers
- returned to the school following the moderation meeting.

Schools retain the completed Form R12 for each Authority-registered subject to:

- inform the internal review of each Authority-registered subject
- provide evidence of processes for future external reviews.
3.6 External reviews

Purpose

External reviews are used by QCAA officers to gather evidence to determine whether the school conforms to the quality assurance processes for the delivery, assessment and recording of results for Authority-registered subjects and short courses.

Focus

External reviews focus on the requirements of the quality assurance process detailed in Section 3.2:

1. partnership with the QCAA
2. regulation of student achievement
3. continual improvement.

The review gathers evidence to determine the effectiveness of the school’s management of the quality assurance process.

All schools that have one or more approved study plans will have an external review.

Guidelines

The external review is:

- conducted by the QCAA twice in a six-year cycle; during the period 2017 to 2019, however, every school that offers an Authority-registered subject will undergo an external review
- focused on the requirements for the quality assurance of student achievement
- based on feedback received on the Form R12 from moderation meetings, previous internal and external reviews, and judgments made about short courses
- focused on identifying and implementing strategies for continual improvement
- documented in the external review report which is retained and used by the school for the next internal review and referred to by the QCAA at the next external review.
Procedures
The QCAA will:

• advise schools, via district coordinators, that they are to undergo an external review
• notify the school at least 15 working days before the review is due to arrive at the QCAA office
• advise schools of the requirements for the review
• contact the school moderator following the review if necessary
• provide the school with a written external review report
• guide the school to develop strategies to achieve continual improvement if required.

Schools will:

• receive advance formal notification that an external review is to be conducted
• arrange the timely delivery of the necessary materials to the QCAA
• provide evidence of the school’s quality assurance processes and continual improvement strategies
• liaise with the QCAA officer to discuss feedback following the external review if required
• implement the strategies for action identified in the external review.

Requirements for an external review
Prior to the external review, schools should have:

• conducted annual internal reviews at the school
• addressed issues identified at moderation meetings and collected evidence of corrective actions
• addressed issues identified at previous internal and external reviews and collected evidence of corrective actions
• notified school personnel of the external review.

Schools are required to provide the following materials for the external review:

• a copy of the school’s last external review report and related evidence of corrective actions
• current approved study plans with documentary evidence indicating approval (see Section 3.3 study plan approval) for each Authority-registered subject offered by the school
• current study plans for all short courses offered by the school
• two complete sample Year 12 student folios, including up-to-date student profiles, from the current Year 12 cohort which show evidence of the school’s use of the relevant dimensions/criteria and standards for each Authority-registered subject offered by the school
• one sample student folio from the current Year 12 cohort, for each short course offered, that contains all work to date (which may include Year 10 and/or Year 11 work)
• a similar folio for each year since the previous external review, for each short course offered
• for each year since the previous external review:
  - annual internal review reports and related evidence of corrective actions for each Authority-registered subject offered by the school
  - Forms R12 for each Authority-registered subject offered by the school and related evidence of corrective action.
Please note:

- If the external review is scheduled during the moderation meetings period, a second submission will need to be prepared to provide the required materials for both processes.
- Schools can use the External review school checklist when preparing for the external review.
- Always keep copies of Forms R10 and R12, internal reviews, study plans for short courses, student profiles and clean assessment instruments.

Following the external review

The QCAA sends the completed external review report to the school principal within a term of the review. The report outlines the findings and a summary of quality-management requirements.

The school is required to address the issues identified for continual improvement by developing and implementing appropriate corrective actions. These are listed in the final section of the report and signed by the principal. The school may find it useful to discuss the findings of the review with a QCAA officer.

No issues identified

When an external review has identified that there are no issues to address, the school continues to develop and maintain processes to ensure the continual improvement of the implementation of Authority-registered subjects and short courses.

Issues identified

When an external review has identified issues, the school is required to complete the Strategies for action — Issues identified section of the report.

Appropriate corrective strategies should be identified for each issue raised, recorded, and implemented.

Evidence of the corrective action is recorded in the school’s annual internal review report and retained for the next external review.

Focused external review

A focused external review is an additional review conducted in the following year for subjects where a range of issues that impact upon the regulation of student achievement or student outcomes has been identified at the external review.

The school is required to complete, sign, scan and return the Strategies for action — Focused review section of the report to the officer who conducted the review within 20 working days.

Schools will receive:

- formal notification at least 15 working days prior to the focus external review
- advice of the required materials for the review.

Preparing for a focused external review

Schools are required to:

- address the recommended actions for continual improvement identified in the school's external review report Strategies for action — Focused review table
- develop and implement strategies in response to the issues identified
- record evidence of the implemented strategies identified in the school’s external review report Strategies for action — Focused review table.
Diagram 2: The external review process

- QCAA conducts external review
- External review report sent to school indicating conformance, issues identified, or need for a focused review
- QCAA officer discusses feedback with school if required
- School develops strategies to action issues identified in the review
- Is a follow-up focused external review required?
- School conducts annual internal reviews
- School completes internal review report and retains evidence for next external review
- QCAA conducts focused external review following year

Resources

- Moderation forms are available from the Senior moderation hub > Forms: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/1426.html
- External review school checklist
- External review report: Sample.