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TO QTU REPRESENTATIVES

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BSSSS responds to QTU concerns on Maths A,B,C Syllabi implementation

As members would be aware (see previous Newsflashes 08/01 and 09/01) the QTU had expressed serious concerns to the BSSSS about the implementation of the revised Senior Maths A,B,C Syllabi.

Following a branch request to Executive just prior to the June vacation, the QTU conducted a survey of secondary maths teachers who voted overwhelmingly to accept a directive to ban further implementation of the Maths A,B,C Syllabi unless the BSSSS agreed to negotiate with the QTU about the areas of concern.

The QTU State Conference and Executive heard reports concerning the progress of these negotiations and decided to defer any ban on further implementation given that the Director of the BSSSS agreed to negotiations between the QTU and the Board. A QTU delegation of Maths HOD representatives met with senior Board officials in mid-July and following that meeting a QTU submission outlining the concerns of members was submitted to the Board for its consideration.

The QTU submission sought to negotiate around a number of issues which included the following:

- Professional issues;
- Timelines;
- Use of marks as an acceptable method of interpreting standards and the accumulation of marks over a suitable number of instruments;
- Authenticity aspect of the changed alternative assessment requirements; and
- The need for a strong statement to be issued from the BSSSS addressing the above concerns.

While the major issue for QTU members has been to allow schools the freedom to use marks and to accumulate marks when considering criteria-based standards in assessment, there were other issues associated with many of the verbal descriptors and the use of the exit table with its various interpretations. The QTU issues were considered by the Board's State Conference of Panel Chairs and the Board itself at its meeting on 10 August 2001.

As a result of discussions, a "Key Messages to Schools - Mathematics A,B,C 2001 Syllabus" document was produced by the Board and this will be distributed to all schools and district panellists immediately. In a covering memo attached to the "Key Messages" document the Director of the Board has issued a strong statement to schools concerning the use of marks to underpin criteria-based standards-referenced assessment.

The QTU Executive at its meeting on 20 August 2001 heard a report that in summary provided the following resolutions from the Board in response to the QTU concerns:

- An acknowledgement from the Board indicating that it is the responsibility of schools to determine the methods used to record information and make decisions about standards in student work;
- An indication from the Board that schools could use numeric or alphabetic descriptors (or a combination of both) when recording information on student achievement in each criterion provided that decisions about exit levels were in accordance with the minimum requirements as stated in each syllabus, Section 7.7 Determining Exit Levels of Achievement;
- An acknowledgement from the Board that it will be necessary to provide professional support to teachers in the implementation of the syllabi. A detailed proposal has been drawn up by the Board and will be distributed to schools as soon as possible;
- Schools where necessary will be granted an extension of timelines in relation to the submission of programs for accreditation;
- An assurance from the Board that ongoing professional issues in relation to the interpretation of the standards descriptors and other issues in this implementation process will be considered and discussed with schools as the accreditation of work programs proceeds.

Executive was of the view that the above assurances from the Board substantially address the concerns of QTU members and therefore the QTU will not proceed with issuing the directive.

The seriousness with which this issue has been considered by the Board is an acknowledgement by it of the validity of the concerns raised by the QTU. QTU reps. and members who responded to the initial request for comment are to be thanked, along with the Maths HOD members who have been providing valuable input into the process while negotiations have been proceeding with the Board.

Authorised by



John Battams
General Secretary
22 August 2001