

To: The Education and Innovation Committee, eic@parliament.qld.gov.au

I am a Senior Physics teacher who has taught Yr 12 Physics in South Australia for 20 years and in Queensland for 15 years. I am concerned about the assessment system the QSA has imposed for the judging of competence in Physics.

For the introduction of the current assessment system for Physics in Queensland, the QSA has conducted various teacher in-service workshops.

In these we have been told explicitly by the presenters that marks are not to be used in making judgements on student performance. Rather, we have to make holistic judgements on an assessment piece by looking for evidence in student responses that matches performance standards stated on a criteria grid. These stated standards are vague and open to interpretation, as evidenced by the debates that have opened up in workshops.

This methodology is highly subjective.

Teachers do find it difficult to

1. confidently make accurate and definitive judgements on both single assessment items and on overall student performance
2. maintain consistency across a class bundle they are assessing
3. reach consensus with other teaching colleagues on standards on the same assessment task

Under the system, students submit 6 assessment pieces in a year. Each is awarded three grades. Knowledge and Conceptual Understanding, Investigative Processes, and Evaluating and Concluding. Teachers are required to distil these grades into an annual grade in these general objectives by looking for trends and employing a holistic judgement on the profile of the year's work. Each of these grades is then further distilled into a single overall grade (level of achievement) using a set of rules determined by the QSA.

The process is a highly time consuming procedure where outcomes are debatable on a teacher/student, teacher/teacher, and teacher/review panel level. Panel comments on submissions are variously critical of different aspects of the same assessment pieces on annual basis. The criticism depends on the personal subjective views of the reviewer, who will change from year to year. This is an unavoidable outcome of this system.

Assessment under this system is largely a matter of gut feeling and opinion rather than outright fact.

Current Physics assessment has significant elements of essay writing which contrasts with traditional testing of competence in Physics of testing knowledge and application in a spectrum of questions from easy to hard. Essay assignments do not give an accurate assessment of a student's competency in the understanding of Physics.

It is sometime hard to judge whether the submitted work has been written by the student. These essays discriminate against students who have English as a second language, who are often quite good mathematicians and who would perform better in a traditional examination system.

The system we abandoned of using marks and percentages was, in my view, a better system. It was simpler to administer, was understood better by students, gave more accurate outcomes and was less demanding of student time. It allowed more time for students to practice real problem solving and deepen their understanding of the subject. Full consideration should be given to returning to the previous system.

Yours faithfully

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I would prefer to remain anonymous for this submission. Thank you.