

Education and Innovation Committee

From: Sandy Sanderson [REDACTED]
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have been teaching Mathematics for 45 years.

From 1969 to 1984 I taught the English curriculum leading to Public Examinations in O Level (15/16 year old pupils) and A level (17/18 year old pupils). This system still pertains.

On my arrival in Queensland in 1985 to teach at Downlands College in Toowoomba, I was dismayed to hear of the idea of "school based assessment" but resolved to keep an open mind.

Nothing that happened in the next 23 years convinced me that the Queensland system of assessment had anything positive about it at all. I can't remember every name given to the seriously flawed system or branches thereof that got worse and worse as time went on. I do seem to recall a Radford, a ROSBA and a BSSSS (how many s's did we need?) which after several years magically transferred itself into "the authority", the QSA.

We had strings of so called educationalists advocating a system of assessment based on "criteria" with no marks being attributed to them until, of course, when a final result had to be tabled and suddenly we did have marks ranging from 990 or later on OP25.

We spent days monitoring, reviewing, certifying, setting and marking exams, time that was taken away from preparing lessons and teaching the subject.

The system of assessment used for Mathematics in England consists purely of Public Examinations (Edexcel and OCR). There is no course-work and no "alternative assessment".

Pupils aged 15/16 do two papers (one non-calculator, one calculator) of 1 hour 40mins each with no perusal time. This is the GCSE (General Certificate in Secondary Education). The assessment is based on marks (harder questions get more marks which automatically takes care of weighting) until the final grade is determined with cut offs as follows. A* 84%, A 69%, B 46%, C 30%, D 20% and E below 20%. E is a fail.

Mathematics is then optional. Pupils who choose to do Mathematics will do either Single or Double Mathematics over the next two years. They will do 3 or 6 exams at the end of the first year and 3 or 6 exams at the end of the second year. The assessment is again based entirely on marks except when final grades are awarded according to the cut offs A* 90%, A 80%, B 70%, C 60%, D 50%, E 40%, F below 40%. F is a fail.

Papers are marked by a board outside the school, freeing up teachers to really prepare lessons and TEACH!

Universities through UCAS take entries based on public exam results.

I would advocate dropping the current form of assessment in Queensland. It is extraordinarily arrogant to persist in the belief that Queensland is the only one "moving in Step".

Regards

Ian Sanderson,

Formerly HOD Mathematics

Toowoomba Grammar School for more than 20 years until 2008.