

Attn: Dr Gabrielle Matters
Australian Council for Educational Research
1/165 Kelvin Grove Rd
KELVIN GROVE QLD 4059

Sent to: Moamar.Nur@acer.edu.au

April 2014

Dear Dr Matters,

Submission:

Please give Qld external exams like the other States

Please accept this letter and attached response to ACER's 'Focus Questions' as my submission to ACER's OP Review*.

(*Qld Review of Senior Assessment and Reporting and Tertiary Entrance)

I am aware that ACER's one-year review is in its final months concluding in July 2014.

Yet it appears from your advice to date that ACER -

1. is **not** considering external exams;
2. is **not** considering scaling school assessment according to external exam results; and
3. **is** considering continuing social moderation.

I am concerned and puzzled as to why ACER is not seriously considering fast-tracking quality external senior subject exams counting towards senior assessment in Queensland, as exists in every other Australian State and high-performing country.

Surely ACER is aware that its approach is **contrary to Qld's 2013 EIC parliamentary inquiry recommendations** and **contrary to ministerial direction** for maths and sciences.

It is well documented that the existing failures in Queensland's education system have put our students behind the national average on all 20 NAPLAN tests in 2013.

This submission urges you to –

- seriously consider the recommendations below, in response to your Focus Questions;
- put an end to this state's 40-year experiment with unproven assessment and tertiary entrance methods.

This submission may be published but I request that my name, address and contact details be kept confidential.

Yours sincerely,

(Name and credentials withheld)

ACER's Focus Questions¹

1. School-based assessment - NEEDS AN ANCHOR

- I recommend that school-based assessment should be restricted to only formative assessments and a minor part (if any) of summative assessment.
- School-based assessment must be aligned to clearly-defined national curriculum so that the standard of assessment is uniform across the State. This was not the case in the recent past in the absence of a clearly defined, sufficiently detailed nation-wide curriculum.
- teacher workload with former Queensland Studies Authority-directed, school-based assessment has become unmanageable with every teacher having to 're-invent the wheel' (EIC p31, ToR 2)²
- there are authenticity and validity problems with school-based tests and especially with assignments (EIC Rec. 4, ToR 3.2, 7.1)³
- supervised, end-of-semester tests are preferred to continuous, time-wasting assignments (EIC Rec. 1, 9, ToR 3.2, 7.1)
- assignments should be limited to 12 - 25% of school-based assessment (EIC Rec. 9, ToR 7.1)
- school results should be based on up-front, transparent calculations (ToR 5)

2. External Assessment for 50% - YES! YES! YES!

- ALL OTHER STATES use pen-and-paper, subject-specific state exams for all subjects (EIC Rec 2, ToR 7.1, 7.2)
- external audit (anchor in reality) for school-based assessment (EIC Rec 2, ToR 7.1)
- level playing field providing unexaggerated results (EIC Rec 2, ToR 7.1)
- to encourage learning of genuine discipline knowledge (EIC Rec 2, ToR 7.1).
- External exams should be standard pen-and-paper, not online-response, especially for mathematics (EIC Rec 2, ToR 7.1)

State of Australia	Standard, pen-and - paper, state-wide senior exit exams	marks added and reported as a percentage	ATAR score
New South Wales	Yes	Yes	Yes
Victoria	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tasmania	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Australia	Yes	Yes	Yes
Western Australia	Yes	Yes	Yes
Queensland	No	No	No

¹ http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/SATE_focus_questions.pdf

² Terms of Reference for Review of Senior Assessment and Reporting and Tertiary Entrance
http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/Qld_Review_Terms_of_Reference.pdf

³ Recommendations in *The Education and Innovation Committee Report No. 25*
<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/EIC/2013/QldAssessment/rpt-025-14Oct2013.pdf>

Table 1. Queensland needs standard senior exit exams, like all other states

3. Moderation - NO MORE

- social moderation is corrupt, unfair, unreliable and must be discontinued (ToR 3.1)
- instead using scaling of school assessment by state exams provides authenticity, and removes the need for central micromanagement of teachers/schools, thus giving teachers flexibility and freedom to achieve goals, with minimum auditing (EIC Rec. 4, 14, ToR 3.1, 7.1)

4. Finer scale for school assessments - MUCH FINER PLEASE

- The finer the better. A 100 point scale is much better than 5 or 15 (ToR 3.3)
- Fine scaled reporting encourages students to exert effort and study (ToR 3.3) by documenting incremental improvements in achievement.

5. Cross-curriculum capabilities testing - NO THANKS

- Cross-curriculum capabilities can be inferred from a student's performance in different subject areas and need not be assessed directly.
- waste of money and students' and teachers' time (ToR 4.3, 4.5)
- not necessary to produce ATAR rankings (ToR 4.3, 4.5)

6. Separation at the secondary-tertiary interface - YES

- A fair and uniform state-wide scoring/ranking system for students completing Year 12 will be helpful to Universities in their selection processes
- Universities are best qualified to determine their own selection requirements for individual courses based on Year 12 exit results.
- Universities should make their subject prerequisites and selection criteria clear and transparent, enabling aspiring students to make informed subject choices (ToR 7.2)

7. Scaling and the construction of rank orders - YES, ATAR

- A single rank order coupled with the subjects undertaken in year 12 will be helpful to Universities in their selection process, whatever process they choose to use (EIC Rec. 4, ToR 7.1)
- Qld should use ATAR like all the other states (ToR 4.6, 7.2)
- difficult, academic subjects should be weighted more heavily than easy subjects
- ranking encourages study and can readily be obtained using state exams (ToR 7.2)
- The generation of all scores must be transparent (ToR 5)

8. Governance - DISCIPLINES, NOT QCAA

- QCAA (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, former QSA) staff do not believe in state exams, and QCAA staff are not trusted by teachers (ToR 4.7)
- Setting curriculum and exams should be done by small teams of discipline experts and experienced teachers, NOT education theorists (ToR 4.7). These teams should be selected not just from the ranks of teachers but also from the ranks of professionals with industry experience in the subject area who have the knowledge to function as 'discipline experts'.

Other issues

- reports to parents should show percentages (ToR 3.4, 5)
- exit statement must show external exam percentages for each subject (ToR 3.4, 4.3, 5)
- choice of quality alternative curricula such as the International Baccalaureate should not be penalised (ToR 4.2)