



**Final Report**  
**Review of ACT Senior Secondary**  
**Assessment and Moderation**

**2018**



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## **1. Acknowledgements**

As chair of the committee I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the members of the committee, their commitment and engagement in extensive and rigorous discussions over the course of our meetings.

Hugh Boulter

Chair

Review of ACT Senior Secondary Assessment and Moderation

## 2. Abbreviations

<b>ACARA</b>	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
<b>ACACA</b>	Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities
<b>AIS</b>	Association of Independent Schools
<b>ACC</b>	Assessment and Certification Committee
<b>ACT BSSS</b>	Australian Capital Territory Board of Senior Secondary Studies
<b>ANU</b>	Australian National University
<b>CAC</b>	Curriculum Advisory Committee
<b>CE</b>	Catholic Education
<b>NESA</b>	NSW Education Standards Authority
<b>ED</b>	Education Directorate
<b>OBSSS</b>	Office of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>WACE</b>	Western Australian Certificate of Education
<b>AST</b>	ACT Scaling Test

### 3. Glossary

<b>Assessment in ACT colleges</b>	Assessment in ACT colleges is used for two purposes by the OBSSS: to awards grades that are linked to standards and to award marks that are used to produce rank lists of student achievement, used in the scaling and meshing process and used for the generation of ATARs.
<b>Learning areas</b>	Learning areas are broad areas of the curriculum, for example, English, mathematics, science, the arts, languages, health and physical education.
<b>Subject</b>	A subject is a discrete area of study that is part of a learning area. There may be one or more subjects in a single learning area.
<b>Frameworks</b>	Frameworks are system documents for Years 11 and 12 which organize curriculum and provide the basis for the development and accreditation of any course within a designated learning area. In addition, Frameworks provide a common basis for assessment, moderation and reporting of student outcomes in courses based on Achievement Standards.
<b>Moderation</b>	Moderation can be quantitative and/or qualitative. Quantitative moderation involves scaling and meshing of marks, as well as using a scaling test such as the AST. Qualitative moderation is the system of discussing grades to ensure reliability and validity of the ACT certification system.
<b>Peer-review (Social) Moderation</b>	Peer-review (Social) Moderation refers to the collaborative process of teacher led reviews of student work to compare grades and ensure reliability and validity across the ACT certification system.
<b>Quality Assurance</b>	Quality Assurance refers to the checking of systems and processes, as well as providing guidance on assessment related issues, to ensure reliability and comparability across schools in senior secondary assessment.
<b>Statistical Moderation</b>	Statistical Moderation refers to the process of using numerical data in the form of marks to calibrate assessment results across courses and colleges (AST).
<b>Meshing</b>	Meshing is the process whereby students are allocated their rank in the whole scaling group.
<b>Criterion-referenced assessment</b>	Criterion-referenced assessment describes a student's achievement against specified criteria, for a specific task or a single competent/not yet competent standard (competency standard).
<b>Standards-referenced assessment</b>	Standards-referenced assessment describes a student's performance in terms of a defined standard of achievement for a unit. The standards describe a range of levels of achievement (Achievement Standards), as detailed in the Framework documents.
<b>Moderation Days</b>	<b>Moderation Days</b> are the days on which peer review of student portfolios of student work occurs on a system-wide basis.
<b>Scaling group</b>	<b>Scaling group</b> is a group of courses at a single college that are grouped together for scaling purposes.

<b>Blind moderation</b>	Teachers moderate student presentations (portfolio) that have been deidentified (i.e. removal of all marks/grades from student presentations).
<b>Expert panel moderation</b>	A small group of expert teachers review student presentations.
<b>Subject Group Leader (SGL)</b>	Teacher who leads a moderation group at Moderation Day.
<b>Assistant Group Leader (AGL)</b>	Teacher who assists the SGL at Moderation Day.
<b>ACS</b>	ACT Certification System – A database to manage certification, assessment and VET.

## 4. Executive Summary

This review is part of the commitment expressed in the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies Strategic Plan 2017-2021 to embed processes of continuous review and renewal; focus on growth and sustainability; ensure fairness and transparency in all that we do; pursue an innovative approach to all aspects of our functions; provide challenge and opportunity for all students and increase engagement with our community.

The purpose of this review is to examine existing Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) assessment and moderation policies and procedures to determine if changes are required to meet future needs within a continuous school-based assessment and consensus peer-based moderation system.

The awarding of the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate is reliant on school-based assessment. The integrity of this nationally recognised credential is dependent upon the quality, reliability and validity of assessment data across ACT senior secondary schools. Moderation processes are intended to achieve the comparability that is necessary to maintain that integrity. Assessment data is not obtained from common assessment instruments or programs, it is derived from judgements based on specified system-wide standards.

Over the past years, assessment and moderation policies and procedures have been subject to ongoing modifications. As part of the process of review and renewal, there is scope to enhance assessment and moderation to meet future needs.

To uphold the rationale and theoretical base underpinning a continuous school-based assessment and consensus peer-based moderation system and meet future needs, this report recommends refurbishment of Moderation Day with a focus on building teacher capacity for developing quality assessment and maintaining consistency and comparability of grades within and across senior secondary schools in the ACT.

This review covered:

- a) vision and principles for assessment and moderation
- b) models for structured consensus-based peer review moderation
- c) quality assessment guidelines
- d) number of tasks and weightings
- e) specific tasks and conditions for types of assessment
- f) selection of teacher-identified quality tasks
- g) processes and procedures for the meshing of courses.

This review did not consider statistical moderation processes which looks at data and methods to ensure parity across colleges using a scaling test. In addition, it does not consider conflicts of interest, definition of units, group assessment, attendance/participation, and completion of assessment items, late submission of assessment tasks, notional zeros, plagiarism and dishonesty and the definition of courses in the ACT. Nor does it include VET certificates, which are produced in accordance with national requirements.

There were two stages to the review. The first stage was a survey and principals' discussion on senior secondary assessment and moderation.

The second stage is the subject of this report. A cross-sector committee was appointed to provide advice on the terms of reference. It is the result of the initial advice, surveys, consultations with principals and coordinators. This committee also considered data provided to it by the Office of the BSSS (OBSSS) in the form of briefing papers.

#### 4.1 Review of ACT Senior Secondary Assessment and Moderation: Recommendations and Background

Terms of Reference with key issues	Draft Recommendations
<p><b>a) vision and principles of Assessment and Moderation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the vision and principles for assessment and moderation be revised?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the following vision and principles for ACT senior secondary assessment and moderation:</p> <p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>Assessment will provide equitable access to quality, valid, reliable, relevant and learning-focused assessments that engage and motivate students, enabling them to show what they know and can do.</p> <p><b>Principles</b></p> <p>That assessment will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain and articulate standards over time that describe student achievement</li> <li>provide information about the level of students’ skill, knowledge and conceptual understandings</li> <li>discriminate between the students</li> <li>recognise the social and cultural contexts of students</li> <li>support teaching and learning goals through clear alignment with curriculum, pedagogy and reporting</li> <li>involve a range and balance of types of assessment and modes of responding</li> <li>enhance professional and public confidence.</li> </ul> <p><b>Moderation</b></p> <p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>Moderation will enrich the development of assessment through maintaining and enhancing the quality assurance and validation of assessment, as well as supporting excellence in pedagogy and a professional learning culture to encourage collaboration at school and system levels.</p>

	<p><b>Principles</b></p> <p>That moderation will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on evidence-based professional judgement of assessment</li> <li>• enrich and refine teacher understanding of quality assessment and its development</li> <li>• be transparent, informative, objective and lack bias</li> <li>• enhance professional and public confidence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b) models for structured consensus-based peer review moderation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should the ACT move to a suite of models for structured consensus-based peer review moderation?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>That the current model for structured consensus-based peer review moderation be reviewed.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>That a cross-sector working party develops a proposal for enhancing the current structured consensus-based peer review moderation.</p> <p>The proposal should consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. communication strategies to increase understanding of the rationale and principles underpinning structured consensus-based peer review moderation including types, significance and quality of feedback</li> <li>b. professional learning strategies to increase system understanding of quality assessment</li> <li>c. investigation of a two-year BSSS moderation cycle</li> <li>d. evaluation of a cycle for Moderation Day that incorporates review of quality assessment and comparability of grades</li> <li>e. building leadership capacity for subject group leaders</li> <li>f. requirements for moderation within colleges.</li> </ol>

<p><b>c) quality assessment guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the ACT senior secondary system develop quality assessment guidelines?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>That the BSSS facilitate a cross-sector working party to develop quality assessment guidelines.</p> <p>The quality assessment guidelines should consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>alignment with vision and principles of assessment</li> <li>provision of advice on using the BSSS Task Type Table and Achievement Standards</li> <li>the school-based assessment context of quality assessment in a senior secondary setting</li> <li>evidence-based research on assessment</li> <li>provision of advice that supports a learning community within schools focused on quality assessment.</li> </ol>
<p><b>d) number of assessment tasks and weightings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should frameworks mandate the number of tasks and weightings in specific learning areas?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>That Frameworks specify 3-5 assessment tasks for a standard 1.0 and 2-3 assessment tasks half standard 0.5 units.</p>
<p><b>e) specific tasks and conditions for types of assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should Frameworks mandate the specific tasks and conditions for types of assessment in specific learning areas, along the lines of the NSW Higher School Certificate (NESA), West Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>Members affirm flexibility for colleges to determine assessment task types and conditions of tasks for assessment consistent with the vision and principles of ACT BSSS assessment.</p>

<p><b>f) selection of teacher-identified quality tasks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the processes for selecting teacher-identified quality tasks at Moderation Days be reviewed?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>That processes for selecting teacher-identified quality tasks at Moderation Days be reviewed.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>That the BSSS explore provision of annotated student A-C grade responses.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>That a cross-sector working party develops processes for selecting teacher-identified quality tasks and annotated student A-C grade responses.</p> <p>The quality assessment processes should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>criteria for identifying quality tasks and rubrics</li> <li>criteria for annotating student A-C grade responses</li> <li>operational strategies for administering and publishing teacher-identified tasks and annotated student A-C grade responses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>g) processes and procedures for the meshing of courses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the processes and procedures for the meshing of courses be reviewed to ensure further understanding of meshing processes across colleges?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p> <p>That the BSSS review processes and procedures for the meshing of courses including communication strategies.</p>

## **5. Background**

### **The ACT Senior Secondary System**

The ACT BSSS leads quality assurance in senior secondary curriculum, assessment and certification. The Board consists of representatives from colleges, tertiary providers, industry, parent organisations and unions.

The configuration of the ACT senior secondary system is unique in Australia. It is a decentralised system of education. This means that colleges have autonomy to make decisions on a range of education issues. A defining feature of our system is school-based curriculum and continuous assessment.

The senior secondary system is based on the premise that teachers are experts in their area – they know their students and community – and so are best placed to develop curriculum and assess students according to their needs and interests.

School-based curriculum means that college teachers are responsible for developing curriculum that is reviewed every five years. The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies accredits a diverse range of curriculum that reflects the needs and interests of all students including vocational and tertiary pathways. Curriculum makes provision for students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities so that all students have the opportunity to achieve an ACT senior secondary certificate. Students have ownership of their learning as they can study courses that are relevant to their interests and provide a pathway beyond year 12.

A defining characteristic of the ACT senior secondary system is its school-based continuous assessment model that ensures students are continually assessed throughout years 11 and 12, with both years contributing equally to senior secondary certification. Teachers and students are positioned to have ownership of senior secondary assessment. The configuration of these processes allows teachers to learn from each other and develop judgement and expertise.

Senior secondary teachers have the flexibility to assess students in a variety of ways. For example: multimedia presentation, inquiry based project, test, essay, performance and/or practical demonstration may all have their place. College teachers are responsible for developing assessment instruments and providing feedback to students.

Only students who desire a pathway to university are required to sit a general aptitude test, referred to as the ACT Scaling Test (AST), which moderates student course scores across subjects and colleges. Students are required to use critical and creative thinking skills across a range of disciplines to solve problems. They are also required to interpret a stimulus and write a response.

### **Moderation**

The integrity of the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate depends on robust, collaborative and rigorous structured consensus-based peer review moderation.

Moderation is undertaken for two purposes: accountability and improvement. Peer reviewed moderation is the process of calibrating assessments so that there is comparability of grades either internally, within a school, or externally, across all sectors and colleges.

Currently, the process involves year 11 and 12 teachers from all public and non-government colleges that offer the ACT senior secondary curriculum. On each Moderation Day, presentations of units from A, T, V, C and M courses are provided for peer review at specified unit grade standards. These presentations include documentation of course unit delivery and a specified number of portfolios of student work according to the

agreed requirements from different courses of study. Teachers' from all ACT colleges compile representative presentations of student work and submit it to the OBSSS.

This moderation process takes place twice a year in early March and August. On each day portfolios of students' work in all subject areas are reviewed. In March the work from year 11 semester 2 is reviewed and in August the work from year 12 semester 1 is reviewed.

Teachers of each course, review presentations from other colleges and comment on:

- adherence to Board policies and course document requirements
- quality and appropriateness of criterion referenced assessment tasks and marking schemes
- teacher judgements of student grade standards against system Achievement Standards.

Consensus peer-based moderation upholds comparability and consistency in the allocation of grades, based on the analysis of student work in relation to Achievement Standards. Collaborative moderation allows teachers to explicitly state and share their tacit knowledge, understandings of curriculum and assessment practices. These professional conversations further develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of curriculum and assessment.

The current moderation model was introduced in 2001. The last significant review of Moderation was in 2009-2010. The focus of this review was whether grades should be changed as a result of Moderation and the use of expert panels.

Following recommendations from the 2009-2010 review, Principals agreed to:

- a more structured and intensive briefing process on Moderation Day
- a greater leadership role for principals in schools and on Moderation Day
- increasing the leadership role of the subject group leader (SGL)
- mandatory review of any presentation with a disparity of two grades or more.

(2010, Board Paper)

In 2017, moderation systems were integrated into the ACT Certification System (ACS) to allow for greater tracking of longitudinal data by schools.

Reviews are part of the BSSS five-year continuous improvement cycle. A review of Assessment and Moderation is timely. The scale of BSSS operations has increased in a several areas. Between the periods of 2008 -2017, there has been a 69% increase in the number of education providers and moderation portfolios have increased by 153%. In 2018, feedback from a survey on Moderation Day indicated a diverse and mixed understanding of the rationale and theoretical base underpinning a continuous school-based assessment and consensus peer-based moderation system. This fast-changing environment presents new challenges to maintain and strengthen our continuous school-based assessment and consensus peer-based moderation system.

## **Survey Results**

In 2018, the OBSSS conducted a survey on senior secondary assessment and moderation. More than 600 teachers across all learning areas responded to this survey.

Overall, survey results indicated a diverse and mixed understanding of the rationale and theoretical base underpinning a continuous school-based assessment and consensus peer-based moderation system. The results indicate an opportunity to develop a common narrative across the system on the principles that underpin our school-based assessment and consensus peer-based moderation system.

## **5.1 Scope of the Review**

This 2018 review focused on ACT senior secondary assessment and moderation. This review did not consider statistical moderation processes which looks at data and methods to ensure parity across colleges through the use of a scaling test. In addition, it did not consider conflicts of interest, definition of units, group assessment, attendance/participation, and completion of assessment items, late submission of assessment tasks, notional zeros, plagiarism and dishonesty and the definition of courses in the ACT. It did not include any review of VET certificates, which are produced in accord with national requirements.

This report is the result of consultations with principals, curriculum coordinators, the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC), Assessment Certification Committee (ACC) and teachers.

## **5.2 Structure of the Report**

The report is set out under the headings indicated in the contents' page. The section on recommendations and background in the Executive Summary is expanded below but in a different format.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Membership of the Committee

The Review of Assessment and Moderation was set up to reflect the main stakeholder groups in the ACT senior secondary system.

Members of the committee:

Members of the committee	Name
Chair	Mr Hugh Boulter
Education Support Office	Ms Kate McMahon
Canberra Institute of Technology	Ms Corinna Connell
University sector	Professor Peter Bodycott
ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association	Ms Crystal Cox
ACT Principals Association	Mr Tom Kobal
	Mr John Alston-Campbell
Association of Independent Schools of the ACT	Ms Lindy Braithwaite
	Ms Kath Morwitch
Catholic Education Colleges	Mrs Judy Knight
	Mr Gregory Baines
Acting Executive Director, BSSS	Mr Martin Watson
Executive Officer, BSSS	Mr Kristofer Feodoroff
Officer, BSSS	Ms Ann Hamer

### 6.2 Key Issues

The following key issues are detailed with each recommendation made in the Decisions and Recommendations section of this report (Section 7)

### 6.3 Committee Meetings

The committee held 4 meetings with the first meeting held on 5 September and the final one on 22 October. At the initial meeting the committee was briefed on the terms of reference, the issues involved, the review process and the role of committee members. As part of the review process, a survey was distributed across jurisdictions on the terms of reference.

To aid the committee's deliberations the Office of the Board provided briefing papers. These papers addressed the issues involved, provided relevant data and suggested questions to consider when forming the committee's recommendations.

In making recommendations the committee considered the data available and the impact of these recommendations on the students, sectors and broader community.

## 7. Decisions and Recommendations

This section of the report is built around each terms of reference with the key issues described in the form of questions and usually followed by a brief statement about the current situation. Beneath each term of reference is the recommendation and the background to that recommendation, in effect a synopsis of the crucial information considered by the committee in forming its recommendation.

### 7.1 Vision and Principles of Assessment and Moderation

- Should the vision and principles for assessment and moderation be revised?

#### Recommendation 1

The committee recommends the following vision and principles for ACT senior secondary assessment and moderation:

#### Assessment

##### Vision

Assessment will provide equitable access to quality, valid, reliable, relevant and learning-focused assessments that engage and motivate students, enabling them to show what they know and can do.

##### Principles

That assessment will:

- maintain and articulate standards that describe student achievement
- provide information about the level of students' skill, knowledge and conceptual understandings
- discriminate between the students
- recognise the social and cultural contexts of students
- support teaching and learning goals through clear alignment with curriculum, pedagogy and reporting
- involve a range and balance of types of assessment and modes of responding
- enhance professional and public confidence.

#### Moderation

##### Vision

Moderation will enrich the development of assessment through maintaining and enhancing the quality assurance and validation of assessment, as well as supporting excellence in pedagogy and a professional learning culture to encourage collaboration at school and system levels.

##### Principles

That moderation will:

- focus on evidence-based professional judgement of assessment
- enrich and refine teacher understanding of quality assessment and its development
- be transparent, informative, objective and lack bias
- enhance professional and public confidence.

## **Background**

The goal was to develop a BSSS vision for assessment and moderation that reflects contemporary ideas and aligns with a school-based curriculum and assessment model.

Members concluded that the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) Guidelines for Assessment Quality and Equity are dated and not directly relevant to the ACT context. The ACACA guidelines published in 1995 were developed for systems that feature high stakes end of year 12 examinations.

Currently, the BSSS Policy and Procedures Manual describes criterion and standards referenced assessment. The BSSS Policy and Procedures Manual also defines and describes moderation in the ACT.

### **7.2 Models for structured consensus-based peer review moderation**

- Should the ACT move to a suite of models for structured consensus-based peer review moderation?

#### **Recommendation 2**

That the current model for structured consensus-based peer review moderation be reviewed.

#### **Recommendation 3**

That a cross-sector working party develops a proposal for enhancing the current structured consensus-based peer review moderation.

The proposal should consider:

- a. communication strategies to increase understanding of the rationale and principles underpinning structured consensus-based peer review moderation including types, significance and quality of feedback
- b. professional learning strategies to increase system understanding of quality assessment
- c. investigation of a two-year BSSS moderation cycle
- d. evaluation of a cycle for Moderation Day that incorporates review of quality assessment and comparability of grades
- e. building leadership capacity for subject group leaders
- f. requirements for moderation within colleges.

## **Background**

The recommendation for enhancing the current peer consensus moderation model is a multidimensional strategy which is designed to enhance teachers' connection with the rationale and theoretical basis of the moderation system. It is envisaged the strategies will enhance quality assessment and comparability of grades across schools, create a common language on structured consensus-based peer review moderation, improve assessment and develop a culture that increases system capacity for positive and robust professional conversations. Moderation within schools is linked to successful system moderation. Explicit directives for internal moderation within schools should be explored.

Members concluded that the current structured consensus-based peer review moderation model could be enhanced and revitalised. Results from a survey indicated that teachers valued moderation for networking, professional learning and providing guidance on assessment. A small number of teachers questioned the

expertise of some reviewers. Some teachers felt vulnerable when receiving feedback on the presentations they submitted for moderation.

Committee members reviewed a suite of models for Moderation Day (refer to Appendix 8.1 for an overview of models). It was decided that key features of any proposed model must:

- ensure comparability of grades across colleges
- increase emphasis on quality assessment
- maintain and develop a professional culture where face-to face collaboration is nurtured
- make provision for different modes of engagement with moderation.

Members acknowledge that recent work led by the BSSS Quality Assurance Officer and team have initiated targeted and productive improvements in a range of areas.

### **7.3 Quality Assessment Guidelines**

- Should the ACT senior secondary system develop quality assessment guidelines?

#### **Recommendation 4**

That the BSSS facilitate a cross-sector working party to develop quality assessment guidelines.

The quality assessment guidelines should consider:

- a. alignment with vision and principles of assessment
- b. provision of advice on using the BSSS Task Type Table and Achievement Standards
- c. the school-based assessment context of quality assessment in a senior secondary setting
- d. evidence-based research on assessment
- e. provision of advice that supports a learning community within schools focused on quality assessment.

#### **Background**

A defining feature of the ACT senior secondary system is school-based continuous assessment. In a school-based continuous assessment system, teachers are responsible for developing assessment instruments and providing feedback to students. Students are continually assessed throughout years 11 and 12, with both years contributing equally to senior secondary certification.

Quality assessment guidelines provide support for teachers on designing effective and robust tasks that are both valid and reliable.

Developing a common understanding of assessment requirements is an important step in working towards achieving consistency of teachers' judgement and comparability between the judgements of teachers.

Quality assessment guidelines will provide opportunities to maintain and develop skills, knowledge and support to conduct assessment effectively. The guidelines will ensure quality assurance and quality control so that the ACT community can have confidence in teachers' judgements.

Provision of system guidelines for quality assessment will focus discussion on quality assessment at structured consensus-based peer review moderation events. It is envisaged that these guidelines will create a common language for quality assessment, which in turn, may address perceptions of a lack of consistency

of teacher judgement. Board endorsed quality assessment guidelines will enable professional learning that aligns and supports structured consensus-based peer review moderation.

Currently, the *BSSS Policy and Procedures Manual* outlines Guidelines for Assessment Quality and Equity developed by ACACA (refer to Appendix 3 *BSSS Policy and Procedures Manual*).

Although the guidelines for Assessment Quality and Equity guidelines developed by ACACA are sound, they are not easily accessible to teachers and are written for systems that have high stakes examinations.

#### **7.4 Number of Tasks and Weightings**

- Should frameworks mandate the number of tasks and weightings in specific learning areas?

#### **Recommendation 5**

That Frameworks specify 3-5 assessment tasks for a standard 1.0 unit and 2-3 assessment tasks for a half standard 0.5 unit.

#### **Background**

In 2008, the Board endorsed a recommendation made by the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC) that Frameworks *recommend* 3-5 assessment tasks for a standard 1.0 and 2-3 assessment tasks half standard 0.5 unit (see Appendix 8.2).

An analysis of frameworks indicated:

- 10 framework *specify* 3-5 tasks for a standard 1.0 unit
- 14 frameworks *recommend* 3-5 tasks for a standard 1.0 unit
- 1 framework *advise* 3-5 tasks for a standard 1.0 unit
- 2 specify a minimum of 3 tasks only for a standard 1.0 unit

For Semester 1 (2018), data indicated that 12 courses set 6 assessment items and 11 courses set 2 assessment items.

It is envisaged that mandating 3-5 assessment tasks for a standard 1.0 and 2-3 assessment tasks half standard 0.5 unit would create consistency and clarify expectations as well as address concerns about stress and workload issues for students.

Members concluded that 3-5 tasks for a standard 1.0 unit/ 2-3 tasks for a half-standard 0.5 unit was the right balance. Fewer tasks potentially raise the stakes of assessment which in turn creates anxiety. Many tasks may create undue stress and anxiety.

Colleges are responsible for the education and assessment of students (BSSS Policy and Procedures 4.1, 25). Currently, Frameworks provide guidelines for task weightings and the number of assessment items. Colleges decide on the number (within BSSS policy), and weightings for tasks.

#### **7.5 Specific tasks and conditions for types of assessment**

- Should Frameworks mandate the specific tasks and conditions for types of assessment in specific learning areas, along the lines of the NSW Higher School Certificate (NESA), West Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)?

## **Recommendation 6**

Members affirm flexibility for colleges to determine assessment task types and conditions of tasks for assessment consistent with the vision and principles of ACT BSSS assessment.

### **Background**

Members affirm flexibility for colleges to determine assessment task types and selection of tasks for assessment.

School-based decision making is at the core of the ACT senior secondary system. To specify tasks and conditions for types of assessment would appear to conflict with this principle, reducing autonomy, flexibility and innovation.

As stipulated in the Campbell Report (1973, 59) *“Colleges should become responsible for their own methods of assessment, appropriate to the needs of their students and the different kinds of courses they are pursuing.”*

Mandating tasks ignores the purposes of assessment and may erode time to focus on the most important aspects of a subject.

## **7.6 Selection of teacher-identified quality tasks**

- Should the processes for selecting teacher-identified quality tasks at Moderation Days be reviewed?

### **Recommendation 7**

That processes for selecting teacher-identified quality tasks at Moderation Days be reviewed.

### **Recommendation 8**

That the BSSS explore provision of annotated student A-C grade responses.

### **Recommendation 9**

That a cross-sector working party develops processes for selecting teacher-identified quality tasks and annotated student A-C grade responses.

The quality assessment processes should consider:

- criteria for identifying quality tasks and rubrics
- criteria for annotating student A-C grade responses
- operational strategies for administering and publishing teacher-identified tasks and annotated student A-C grade responses.

### **Background**

At Moderation Day, teachers identify assessment items that are deemed interesting or original. The process for selecting tasks is subjective. There are no agreed system criteria for discriminating quality tasks. Tasks that are currently online date back as far as 2009. In 2011, exemplar tasks on the *Myclasses* website were copied over onto the BSSS Website. Some assessment tasks relate to courses that are no longer being taught. Potentially these tasks could be misleading for teachers.

Provision of quality assessment tasks and annotated student A-C grade responses is a practice in other jurisdictions. *Australian Curriculum v 8.3* has exemplars online illustrate the levels of student work that is

expected along with annotations showing why it is at the level. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has exemplars of work on line for subjects.

Teacher-identified tasks and annotated student A-C grade responses make thinking and judgements explicit and visible for teachers. This is an important policy lever that will build capacity in the senior secondary system to develop quality assessments and ensure consistency in the allocation of grades across the system.

### **7.7 Processes and procedures for the meshing of courses**

- Should the processes and procedures for the meshing of courses be reviewed to ensure further understanding of meshing processes across colleges?

#### **Recommendation 10**

That the BSSS review processes and procedures for the meshing of courses including communication strategies.

#### **Background**

In 2008, the *Teacher Guide: Best Practice in Meshing Unit Scores* was developed. This document provides generic guidelines for meshing.

In 2017 the Board approved the *Teachers' Guide to Meshing: Best Practice for Creating a Rank Order in Tertiary Language Courses*. This work led to some improved practices in delivery of languages courses and other subject areas may benefit from a similar process.

An accurate rank order for students studying tertiary courses is about equity. Revision of current processes and procedures for meshing of courses will raise awareness of the importance of accurate meshing and support teachers new to our system.

## 8. Appendices

### 8.1 Models for Social (collaborative) Moderation

#### Model 1: Current System

<b>Moderation Day 1</b>
Year 11 work from previous year semester 2
<b>Moderation Day 2</b>
Year 12 work from current year semester 1

#### Advantages

- maintains familiar processes
- supports teacher understanding of and engagement with the system
- provides contextual professional learning
- allows for cross sectoral discussions
- develops teacher understanding standards
- control sits with the teacher and the college
- gives leadership opportunities to staff
- tracks data that is currently being collected.

#### Disadvantages

- repetitive process
- underpinning rationale for Moderation Day process can be forgotten
- feedback is not available for units not moderated
- some units of work are not externally moderated in the two-year cycle
- not so effective if teachers are not collaborative during discussions.

## Model 2: Current 1-year System modified

Moderation Day 1
Year 11 work from previous year semester 2 but schools do not need to submit work if they have a good track record of accuracy and quality assurance.
Moderation Day 2
Year 12 work from current year semester 1 but schools do not need to submit work if they have a good track record of accuracy and quality assurance.

### Advantages

- everyone has a clear understanding of the system as it has not changed and has work available for these dates
- social (collaborative) moderation is powerful professional learning for people and allows for cross-sectoral discussions
- develops teacher understanding of curriculum and of standards
- provides leadership opportunities to staff
- rewards schools who do a good job
- track data that is currently being collected.

### Disadvantages

- repetitive process
- underpinning rationale for moderation day process can be forgotten
- some units of work are not externally moderated in the two-year cycle
- for units not moderated, feedback is not available
- not so effective if teachers are not collaborative during discussions
- little change from current system – will staff notice little difference other than fewer presentations for review.

### Model 3: A 2-year System proposal

Moderation Day 1 Year 1	Moderation Day 1 Year 2
<p>Focus just on Year 11 and 12 assessment tasks and how effective they are. Schools receive feedback on the task and suggestions for improvement. Tasks are all supplied on USB and then annotated by reviewers to show what is effective and what could be improved. Review is guided by a checklist to consider for each task presented. ACS is not used as a repository of information.</p> <p><b>Teachers work in their own schools and work is submitted to them and then collected. Heads of Faculty will organise the work.</b></p>	<p>Review of presentations as currently working in the ACT. Use of SGL and AGL. Work is presented and all grades reviewed are recorded in ACS. (Year 12)</p>
Moderation Day 2 Year 1	Moderation Day 2 Year 2
<p>Review of presentations as currently working in the ACT. Use of SGL and AGL. Work is presented and all grades reviewed are recorded in ACS. (Year 11)</p>	<p>Expert panels are developed in each subject and these teachers come out of school to review work. Work presented is limited so that if a school is doing a good job, their work is not submitted to the expert panel. This is decided by the BSSS based on pre-moderation reports and College Action plan information. (Year 11 or 12)</p>

#### Advantages

- new format looks at refreshing the system
- emphasis on assessment tasks builds capacity in the system and ensures better assessment throughout the next 18 months
- expert panel provides a quality feedback system which also allows for the collation of reports about trends in each subject
- still have 2 opportunities to track data currently collected and provide feedback to schools in report format.

#### Disadvantages

- teachers can choose to do assessments in the semester they are not being collected which might be more difficult to moderate or collect evidence for (e.g. group work/ oral)
- some units of work are not externally moderated in the two-year cycle
- feedback is not available for units not moderated
- change can be disorienting
- opportunities for cross-sectorial collaboration are reduced.

#### Model 4: A 2-year System proposal

Moderation Day 1 Year 1	Moderation Day 1 Year 2
Assessment task review – Year 11 and 12 – all staff come together to do	Blind moderation – Year 11 – all staff come together to do
Moderation Day 2 Year 1	Moderation Day 2 Year 2
Online moderation – Year 12. Teachers in their own school.	Expert panels – Year 11 and 12

#### Advantages

- system refreshed by new format
- emphasis on assessment tasks builds capacity in the system and ensures better assessment throughout the next 18 months
- expert panel provides a quality feedback system which also allows for the collation of reports about trends in each subject.

#### Disadvantages

- online moderation will be difficult to manage as we will need a platform for it
- currently online moderation is an expensive option
- online moderation will not encourage debate across all sectors as it would be undertaken in the teacher's school
- some extra administration time/costs with blind moderation
- the change each semester could be confusing for staff
- loss of longitudinal data.

## 8.2 Number of Assessment Items per Assessment Period

<b>Item No:</b> 4.3	<b>Meeting No:</b> 5/2008	<b>Meeting Date:</b> 21 August 2008
<b>Action:</b> Discussion		<b>From:</b> Curriculum Advisory Committee
<b>Title:</b> Number of Assessment Items per Assessment Period		

### **Recommendation:**

That the recommended number of assessment tasks specified in course frameworks be amended as follows:

The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies recommends 3 – 5 assessment tasks across a full semester unit and 2 - 3 assessment tasks for a 0.5 unit. These should not be a compilation of a number of small discrete tasks (e.g. mini-tests) but may include a portfolio that provides coherent evidence of the depth of student learning.

### **Background**

Concerns have been raised about the stress and workload issues for students who may be completing 5 or 6 subjects with possible 6 assessment items in each subject to give them 30 assessment items over the semester.

The Curriculum Advisory Committee looked at the number of items expected for year 11 and 12 students, in other states. Many of these states require significantly fewer items in each semester. See below.

The committee also looked at the number of different task types required course frameworks, and there were generally 2 - 4. This highlights that if the range was changed to 3 - 5 all task types could be accommodated in a semester. See below.

The Year 12 moderation folders submitted for the Moderation Day in August were also reviewed to see how many assessment items were required. The number of assessment items per semester ranged from 2 - 8 but the majority of subjects and colleges used 4 or 5 items. See below.

It is believed that over the last 5 years the number of items per semester has generally decreased.

The committee discussed the issue of half units and felt that for colleges wanting to maintain two underlying half units for a semester unit they could stay with 4 items. Underlying half units allow students to enter late or exit early in a semester unit. It was felt that 2 assessment items in a half unit is a minimum but in some subjects 3 tasks may still be required. The recommendation allows this.

Chris Hayes

Chair

## **Information from other Australian states**

### **Queensland**

Since the late 90s Queensland has moved to having formative assessment only in year 11 and summative assessment in year 12.

Only year 12 counts towards the UAI.

The recommendation for year 12 (whole year) is 4 to 6 summative assessment items.

Most subjects complete 4 before October when portfolios are submitted for moderation and one after this.

They do not mandate assessment numbers in year 11 but do talk about what is assessed summatively should be assessed formatively first. This explanation assists schools in realising that the same assessment techniques should be addressed in both the formative (for the most part year 11) and summative (year 12) parts of the course.

### **IB**

Have 3 to 4 summative assessment items over the course (which is two years).

End of course exam is normal and sometimes there are two end-of-course exams.

### **Tasmania**

Have no explicit requirement regarding the number of assessment items. Most of our courses use a criterion-based approach where there are about ten explicit criteria that need to be rated against a set of standards. Advice is that there need to be more than one assessment of each criterion but acknowledge that single activities produce evidence for multiple (but not all) criteria.

### **NSW**

Schools are required to develop an assessment program for each of their courses (they define a course to be one year). This involves:

Identifying a minimum number of tasks that will be used to measure student's achievements in each syllabus component. Three to five tasks of various types (e.g. formal examinations, practical tests, oral tests) are generally sufficient to assess the components of a 2-unit course. In the case of a 2 Unit English course 5 to 6 tasks are considered appropriate. For one-unit courses, 2 to 3 tasks generally would be sufficient. (Maths has 2 units plus a 1-unit extension) Schools usually count their trial exam and a half-year exam as 2 of their 5 assessment items.

NSW are looking at reducing their recommendation to no more than 4 assessment items per course.

### **WA**

Each year has 3 or 4 assessment items in bands of assessment types (usually 3 bands)

At the end of the exiting year there is an external exam as well. Mostly this is for year 12 students but if you just do year 11 you can do the exam then. The exam is a requirement for a Tertiary bound student. WACE course, not tertiary bound do not have an external exam.

### **South Australia**

Year 11 (Stage 1)

Each curriculum statement states: "In each 1-unit subject, students should be given between four and six summative assessment tasks. Students should complete at least one task from each assessment

component." A 1-unit subject consists of 50 to 60 hours of programmed time. It is normally considered to be a one-semester or half-year subject.

#### Year 12 (Stage 2)

Each curriculum statement defines the assessment requirements for that particular subject. In broad terms it would be fair to assume a total number of tasks similar to Year 11, but more likely described as the number required within each assessment component. The number is also determined by the size (e.g. word count) and complexity of the tasks required.

There are examples that show 3 tasks.

#### Victoria

Over the two years there are 4 semester units.

In units 1 and 2 (year 11) the recommendation is for 2 to 3 assessment items per unit, but it is less prescriptive about what types of assessment.

In units 3 and 4 it is recommended for 2 to 3 assessment items per unit with directions as to what type of assessment task type is required. At the end of the year an exam based on the year 12 work is done worth 50%. Science subjects also have a mid-semester exam.

#### Appendix 5:

##### Number of assessment tasks in the current framework

Number of Task Types	Frameworks
2	IT, Maths, Health, Outdoor and Physical Education, Science, Theory of Knowledge, Tourism and Hospitality
3	Accounting, Business and Economics Behavioural Science, Design and Technology, English, ESL, Fashion and Textiles, Food and Resource Management, History, Industrial Trades and Technology, Languages Latin, Legal and Political Studies, Media, Music, Performing Arts
4	Visual Arts, Business Studies, Contemporary Transition, Cultural Studies, Geography

##### Based on Moderation folders from year 12 semester 1 2008

Majority of schools Number of assessment items per semester	Course	
3	Hospitality T	
4	Accounting T Business Enterprise A Business management T Business Studies A/T Economics T	Beginning Chinese T Advanced Chinese T Continuing French T Beginning German T Beginning Italian

	<p>Information Technology A/T</p> <p>Legal Studies A/T</p> <p>English A/T</p> <p>ESL A/T</p> <p>Sports studies A/T</p> <p>Agriculture A</p> <p>Biology A/T</p> <p>Chemistry T</p> <p>General Science A/T</p> <p>Physics T</p> <p>Psychology/T</p> <p>Sociology A/T</p> <p>Geography A/T</p> <p>History A/T</p> <p>Religious studies A/T</p> <p>Food and science management A/T</p>	<p>Continuing Italian T'</p> <p>Mathematical applications T</p> <p>Mathematical methods T</p> <p>Specialist mathematics T</p> <p>Human Movement T</p> <p>Outdoor Education A</p> <p>Physical Education A</p> <p>Sports and Recreation A</p> <p>Sports science a/T</p> <p>Art and Design A/T</p> <p>Dance A</p> <p>Media T</p> <p>Photography A</p> <p>Hospitality A</p> <p>Metal Engineering A/T Design and Technology A/T</p>
5	<p>Media A</p> <p>Music A/T</p> <p>Photography T</p> <p>Business Administration A</p> <p>Continuing Chinese T</p> <p>Beginning French T</p> <p>Continuing Italian A</p> <p>Beginning Spanish T</p> <p>Continuing Spanish T</p> <p>General Mathematics A</p>	<p>Automotive A</p> <p>Design and graphic communication A/T</p> <p>Horticulture A</p> <p>Earth science T</p> <p>Dance T</p> <p>Drama A/T</p> <p>Applied science A</p> <p>Fashion design A/T</p> <p>General construction A/T Sports Administration A/T</p>
6	<p>Tourism A/T</p> <p>Continuing German T</p> <p>Beginning Japanese T</p> <p>Continuing Japanese T</p>	

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