



FAQs (Schools)

Updated 7.4.2020

Introduction

The purpose of this FAQ is to provide guidance to schools for flexible delivery of senior secondary curriculum and assessment.

If you are unsure of the interpretation or the application of the following information, please contact the Office of the BSSS.

The scope of this FAQ will be updated as required. New questions forwarded to the OBSSS will be included where appropriate.

Updated advice is highlighted in yellow.

Questions

Q 1: Can schools vary the planned assessment?

A: Yes. Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.6.1 states “The published Unit Outline may only be varied by the teacher in exceptional circumstances in consultation with the classes concerned and the head of department. All changes to a Unit Outline must be made in writing.”

Principals should consider the current context in relation to COVID-19 as an exceptional circumstance.

Unit Outlines are the single points of truth that indicate the assessment students will do during a unit of work. They must therefore be updated and made available to students when changes are made.

Please note that the weightings of completed assessment cannot be changed.

Any change to assessment as described in Unit Outlines must be made in consultation with students. Students must be given the opportunity to contribute to the process prior to changes being made to the published Unit Outline. This could be done digitally including through email or a school’s online learning platform. It is advisable that schools keep a record of this consultation and provide all students with clear written communication including a rationale for the change.

ACS will need to reflect any amendments to assessment in updated Unit Outlines.

Q 2: Do the assessments reflected in the Unit Outline need to be compliant with task type tables in the relevant Framework?

A: Schools should be prepared to deliver all assessment as non-supervised.

Schools may deviate from the advice in the Task Type Table. For example, where the table specifies a test, alternative tasks can be used.

Replacement assessments for practical tasks are permitted.

As with all assessment, replacement tasks must incorporate the expectations of the Achievement Standards.

Variations to the weightings of assessments (as described in the Task Type Table) that are yet to be completed can also be considered.

All changes must include consultation with students.

Schools will be provided with information to support this process in the context of ACS.

Q 3: Can schools reduce the number of assessment items as specified by the Framework?

A: Yes, providing the minimum required number of assessment items is maintained.

Board guidance states:

- For a standard unit (1.0), students must complete a **minimum of three assessment tasks** and a maximum of five.
- For a half standard unit (0.5), students must complete a **minimum of two assessment tasks** and a maximum of three.
- In a standard 1.0 unit, no single item can be weighted more than 50%.

For the period of the COVID-19 response, schools are required to continue to assess students as per these guidelines.

Q 4: What are the current expectations of students undertaking senior secondary education?

A: To be awarded units towards the Senior Secondary Certificate students are expected to meet participation and assessment requirements (Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.8 and 4.3.9). However, there may be variations in the continuity of delivery as schools transition to the online environment.

In the current situation, students are expected to be engaged with the course work provided by the school. Teachers should aim to continue the learning of students online and provide them with appropriate assessment opportunities.

Q 5: How should schools calculate 'hours' for class participation?

A: To award a unit, schools and teachers should monitor student participation and progress in structured learning activities as per Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.8 and 3.2.9.2.

A standard unit requires 55 hours of structured learning activities.

A student should not receive a V grade based on attendance/participation if the principal and class teacher believe that the student has participated satisfactorily in at least 90% (see 4.3.8) of the structured learning activities that have been provided.

Q 6: Are students required to complete assessment?

A: Yes. Non-completion of assessment items is detailed in Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.9.

Q 7: Can students complete test-type assessment at home? How do we know students are not colluding in person or online, or that other resources are not being accessed?

A: Online testing using simulated ‘test conditions’ is not currently recommended. Any proposed arrangements for online, proctored (integrity assured and appropriately supervised) testing must be discussed with the Office of the BSSS in advance.

All assessment should provide equity of access, equivalency in conditions, and maintain academic integrity.

In the ACT senior secondary sector, online testing is in its infancy and presents challenges. Online testing introduces a range of new conditions, expectations and risks for students. Without proper preparation, practise and acclimatisation, online testing may have unpredicted impacts on students, particularly in a time of uncertainty.

Please consider the following:

- student familiarity with online testing conditions
- variance in individual student capacity to adapt to new testing conditions
- wellbeing issues stemming from unfamiliar testing conditions
- absence of the familiar shared testing environment
- confidence in the integrity of online testing may be impacted as students cannot personally verify it – as they would be able to if they were physically doing a test with other students at school.

At this time, it is recommended that schools avoid online tests and explore other types of assessment including research, written, oral, performance, demonstrations, student negotiated.

Academic integrity can and must be upheld in all school-based assessment. The validity of assessment is underpinned by the processes implemented by schools when assessing student work. Remember the assessment principles of validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility. See the **Quality Assessment Considerations**.

Q 8: What allowances can be made for students who cannot participate in learning due to medical conditions?

A: Students with medical conditions continue to be covered by Special Consideration processes detailed in Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.13.

Q 9: Can students be given an estimate for an assessment item or awarded a Status grade?

A: Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.6.5 and 4.3.13 indicates students should only be given an estimate, or awarded a Status grade, if they are unable to complete the work due to illness or misadventure. The general condition of the pandemic is not sufficient grounds. As such, students who are participating in online learning are also expected to participate in assessment. In all cases, estimates and Status should continue to be a last resort and must always supported by the appropriate documentary evidence, and on an individual student basis.

Q 10: What happens if students have not submitted work and/or assessment as specified because of technological failure or lack of access?

A: Normal school practices that support students who have online access challenges should be continued in order to maintain equity.

Q 11: What forms reasonable grounds for appeal?

A: Current policy remains unchanged. The grounds for an appeal fall broadly into two areas (refer to Policy and Procedures Manual section 7)

- the published procedures used to calculate an assessment or unit grade or score, have not been followed, or have been applied unfairly or incorrectly
- an inappropriate penalty has been imposed for a breach of discipline in relation to assessment, including the severity of the penalty or denial of the breach of discipline

Q 12: How should schools teach and assess practical or workshop-based subjects?

A: Some assessment may be possible. For example, some skills may be able to be assessed using video evidence or simulations. Assessment could also focus on theoretical components.

If the required practical learning or assessment is not possible alternative learning opportunities within the unit of study or alternative curriculum may be options.

Schools must understand that there will be limitations on what can be assessed at this time.

Some assessment may be possible. For example, live or video evidence of a performance or oral, simulations or demonstrations of experiments which allow for analytical responses, or scenario-based task including reflections or critique.

If the required practical learning or assessment is not possible alternative learning opportunities and assessments within the unit of study, or alternative curriculum could be considered.

As C courses are competency based only, replacement units of study from other courses or changing to a V course equivalent, where it exists, are appropriate options.

Q 13: How should schools manage the assessment of VET competencies?

A: Competencies are required to be assessed according to the relevant training package and be compliant with ASQA regulations. See ASQA advice (<https://www.asqa.gov.au/coronavirus-advice>).

If a competency has not been demonstrated by the student, they cannot be deemed competent.

Schools must understand that there will be limitations on the competencies that can be both taught and assessed at this time.

Within a T/A/M/V unit, schools are able to focus on delivery of accessible content descriptions and assess students according to the Achievement Standards.

Q 14: How should schools manage students with ASBAs or VET workplace learning?

A: Schools should be aware that work placements may be suspended.

Placement continuation is dependent on the support of the student and parent/carer, RTO, workplace and school.

Schools should explore other options with students who may be reliant on these courses to complete their Senior Secondary Certificate as contingencies if their work placement is suspended.

Q 15: Can students receive Status for C units if assessment is not possible?

A: Schools should explore other options if they identify students who may be reliant on C courses to meet the minimum requirements of their Senior Secondary Certificate. This may include the delivery of a corresponding T/A/M/V course to students.

Status is allowed for C units in Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.6.5 for illness or misadventure but should be considered a last resort. C course enrolment is not considered misadventure.

As a result of the current circumstances, C courses and their possible impact will be reviewed.

Q 19: Can schools defer assessment tasks?

A: Schools should explore alternative task types to maintain student engagement in their learning. As with Status and estimates, deferment should be used cautiously.