



Preliminary entries in the New HSC – some observations

As Year 12 students approach the first New Higher School Certificate examinations in October this year the second cohort of New HSC students is undertaking the Preliminary course of study.

We now have Preliminary entry data for two cohorts of Year 11 students for the New Higher School Certificate. This allows us to compare the total number of Preliminary entries for each course in 2000 and 2001 to find out whether patterns of study have changed noticeably from the first cohort to the second.

At a broad glance, there has been little change in either the overall size of the two cohorts (71 632 in 2000; 72 382 in 2001) or in the average number of units studied, (11.98 in 2000; 11.90 in 2001). As a result, the change in Preliminary entries from 2000 to 2001 would be expected to be minimal.

Twenty-nine percent of Preliminary students are undertaking a program of study comprising 13 or more units, which is greater than the 12 units required for students to be eligible for the award of the Higher School Certificate. This indicates that students are choosing to study more subjects than they have to, suggesting that the New HSC is encouraging students to work beyond minimum expectations.

The change in statewide entries for most subjects from 2000 to 2001 has been minimal, with notable exceptions in some subjects. The reasons for such changes can only be surmised at this stage. Without further research, it is not possible to know why certain changes have arisen either across the state or within individual schools or groups of schools. Principals and teachers are in the best position to know why changes in enrolment patterns have occurred within their own school.

The proportion of the cohort enrolled in higher levels of English courses has risen in 2001 which is in line with the Government's objectives to strengthen English and to arrest the decline in students undertaking advanced study. Over one-third of all students now choose the most challenging 2 Unit course in English. Well over 25 000 students (35.5%) are currently undertaking the Preliminary English Advanced course, which represents a 1% increase on last year's entries. English Extension 1 has risen by 5% from 5 756 entries in 2000 to 6 060 in 2001.

Fundamentals of English is a flexible Preliminary course which can be delivered in Year 11 only or across Years 11 and 12. Taken in conjunction with either the English Standard or ESL course, it has been designed to assist students who require additional support to meet the outcomes of these English courses. Fundamentals of English enrolments have risen by 10%, from 5 194 in 2000 to 5 716 students in 2001, suggesting that more students are using the course to improve their overall English performance.

Overall Preliminary entries in Mathematics have increased by 1%. The largest change has occurred in General Mathematics, where enrolments have increased by 6% from 31 157 in 2000 to 33 156 in 2001. This suggests that students who would have previously taken Mathematics in Practice in the old HSC have chosen the more demanding 2 Unit General Mathematics course. This change is offset partly by a decrease of 4% in the calculus-based 2 Unit Mathematics course with over 41% of the cohort currently enrolled in 2 Unit Mathematics. The proportion of the cohort enrolled in Mathematics Extension 1 remains at 17%.

One of the most significant increases in Preliminary entries from 2000 to 2001 was in the VET curriculum frameworks. The overall growth in Preliminary entries for all VET curriculum framework courses was 24%, indicating increased demand and parity of esteem for VET subjects within the New Higher School Certificate. This represents a large jump in the proportion of entries in VET framework courses, expanding from 32% to 39% in one year.

Enrolments have increased in each VET framework course, ranging from 11% in Tourism to 60% in Information Technology. This trend indicates that the New HSC has been highly successful in enhancing the quality of vocational courses, which was one of its key objectives.

The most popular VET courses continue to be Hospitality (9 775), Information Technology (6 068), Business Services (3 853), Construction (2 724) and Retail (2 635).

The number of Year 11 students studying at least one Board Developed VET Course was 19 346 (28.5% of the candidature) in 2000 as against 24 357 (33.1% of the candidature) in 2001. This represents an increase of 26%.

HSC and SC Important Dates

Year 10

- 14 Sep** Final date for amendments to students entries.
- 15 Oct** Schools Online grade collection service opens. Schools Online Profile Sheet collection for Special Programs of Study opens.
- 17 Oct** Latest date for principals to notify students of intention to award an 'N' determination.
- 22 Oct** Latest date for student appeals against 'N' determinations to be lodged with the principal.
- 26 Oct** Dispatch Illness/Misadventure forms. Latest date for principals to submit 'N' determination appeal forms with related documentation where appeal declined and Board review requested.

Year 11

- 14 Sep** Final date for amendments to student entries.
- 17 Oct** Latest date for date for principals.
- 19 Oct** Final date for submission of VET course competencies via Schools Online.
- 22 Oct** Latest date for student appeals against 'N' determinations to be lodged with the principal.
- 29 Oct** Latest date for principals to submit 'N' determination appeal forms with related documentation where appeal declined and Board review requested.

Year 12

- 2 Sep** Completion date for Design and Technology Major Design Projects. Completion date for English Extension 2 Projects. Completion date for Visual Arts artworks (submission dates to be advised).
- 9 Sep** Completion date for Music Compositions and Musicology essays (submission dates to be advised). Completion date for Agricultural Research Projects.
- 10 Sep** HSC Music Practical exams commence.
- 14 Sep** Final date for submission of assessments. Schools must produce assessment confirmations.
- 21 Sep** Dispatch general entry forms for TAFE delivered vocational courses to be undertaken in Term 4.
- 19 Oct** Final date for submission of VET course competencies.
- 22 Oct** HSC Examinations commence.
- 26 Oct** Dispatch assessment ranking sheets for distribution to each student after last examination at school.

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CHECK YOUR MAILBOX



- ❖ HSC Exams 2001 Timetable Poster
- ❖ English 7–10 Draft Writing Brief Survey
- ❖ History Course Performance Descriptors
- ❖ Geography Course Performance Descriptors
- ❖ K–10 Curriculum Framework Survey
- ❖ English K–6 Work Samples CD-ROM
- ❖ Studying for the New HSC – An Information Booklet for Year 10 Students

The *Board Bulletin* is a regular publication by the Board of Studies NSW. Principals are requested to circulate it among teachers and members of the School Council, P & C and parents. One copy should be filed for reference. Schools may only photocopy this publication for use by teachers, students and parents. Contributions or suggestions for articles are welcome.

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President's Message



The recent Curriculum for the Knowledge Age conference held in Sydney provided a forum for discussion of the centrality of knowledge in the curriculum. Some speakers believed that the explosion of information and the accessibility of it through the new information and communication technologies means that the development of

generic skills and learning how to learn is more important than content. However the dilemma for such advocates is that research evidence demonstrates that such skills are best acquired in different content contexts.

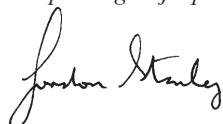
There is risk in dismissing traditional subjects and the specialised skills and language associated with different paradigms of knowing in favour of a narrow set of metacognitive skills supposedly suited to the knowledge age. To argue for such is to limit the educational experience of students and to make them too dependent on technology. Like many issues raised in conference debate, there is a need to resolve apparently contradictory positions.

We need to ensure that students are developing relevant metacognitive and generic competency through their experiences with our syllabus content. Indeed that is one of the key principles embodied in our new draft K–10 Curriculum Framework.

Ultimately the question of what content should be in our heads rather than on the hard drive of our laptop or accessed through the Internet is a major issue and one that is not easily resolved. It is an issue that will need to be addressed as we look at content issues in each revision of our syllabuses.

The English K–6 CD-ROM of Work Samples has now been distributed to schools and should be a valuable resource for primary teachers. The high quality of production of electronically-based materials by the Board has been recognised nationally. Three products were shortlisted for the Australian Publishers Awards and two won awards: Street Sense and the Gallipoli website. The production and design team at the Office of the Board deserves our congratulations for creating such valuable resources.

This issue of the Bulletin contains a number of articles about the New HSC. It is important to read these articles in the overall context of the role and purpose of HSC reform. From my visits to schools and discussion with students, parents, teachers and principals I am aware of the need for us to ensure that the results of the New HSC are understood in the context of the changes. Superficial comparisons with the past are counter-productive and misleading. The communication packages we have planned will assist school communities to appreciate the new paradigm of reporting and its meaning.



(Professor) Gordon Stanley

Board Bulletin in brief

Preliminary entries in the New HSC — some observations

Preliminary entry data for the two cohorts of Year 11 students show that higher level English courses and VET framework courses are becoming increasingly popular.

Advice Line opens early for the New HSC

Students will have access to the HSC Advice Line during the October school holidays.

Features of HSC marking for the New HSC

Key features of the marking process have been refined to support a standards-referenced approach for the 2001 HSC examinations.

New HSC Information Kit – what's coming

This important resource for schools and school communities will be distributed early in Term 3.

New HSC standards packages

Standards packages consisting of a CD-ROM containing band descriptions, examination papers and sample student responses showing the different levels of achievement in 2001 HSC courses will arrive in schools in Term 1, 2002.

Primary Matters

An English K–6 CD-ROM of work samples has been developed.

Establishing explicit standards in the New HSC

The process of establishing standards in the New Higher School Certificate will ensure that standards are comparable from year to year.

Review of Years 7–10 syllabuses

The State budget provided \$27 million for a revision of the Years 7–10 curriculum.

Development of an HSC Curriculum Framework in the Entertainment and Music Industry

Two new HSC courses will be available from 2003.

2001 HSC examination papers

Students will be assisted by the new lay-out and format of the 2001 HSC examination papers.

Mathematics K–10 syllabus development

The draft syllabus writing brief for Mathematics K–10 has been released.

Features of HSC marking for the New HSC

Marking of students' responses to the 2001 HSC examinations will adopt a standards-referenced approach to support the standards-based New HSC.

Most experienced markers will note little difference in the procedures for marking in 2001. Behind the scenes, however, examination committees, supervisors of marking and senior markers will have been working hard to ensure that the new marking guidelines based on standards have been checked and elaborated so that marking proceeds smoothly and achieves fair outcomes for students.

For instance, in previous HSC marking operations, marking schemes were developed at the marking centre and were designed to achieve a spread of marks on each question, often in a predetermined pattern. For the New HSC, marking guidelines are developed concurrently with the examination by the examination setters. Marks will be allocated to responses according to the extent to which the response addresses the criteria established in the guidelines.

Examination papers for the New HSC have been carefully planned and set so that questions target particular levels of difficulty, guided by the descriptions in the performance bands. Questions set at lower levels of difficulty may have a large proportion of students receiving full marks, while those pitched at higher order levels may have a small proportion obtaining full marks. Some questions and their marking guidelines will spread students over the full mark range. The examination paper as a whole will allow students to demonstrate achievement over the range of performance described in the bands in the course performance scale.


Previously, marking schemes were developed and adjusted at the marking centre in the light of the quality of student responses, to achieve the required spread. However, marking guidelines for the New HSC have been developed

by the examination committees as they set the questions. Questions and marking guidelines will make clear what is required and the marks awarded will reflect the overall quality of the student responses required. Better quality responses will be rewarded with higher marks.

The marking guidelines are carefully checked and supervisors of marking have been involved. At the marking centre, the marking guidelines and in some cases the schemes will be elaborated and supported by exemplar scripts chosen by senior markers during pilot marking. As in past years there will be unanticipated or unusual responses. The supervisor of marking will take account of these on a case by case basis. It will not be necessary to rewrite the guidelines to take account of such responses.

In the previous norm-referenced approach to marking, students who 'described' or 'outlined' in a question asking for evaluation or analysis may have been able to get full or high marks in order to achieve the required spread of marks. Standards-referenced marking guidelines for the New HSC are developed with close attention to the wording of the question. The key words used in the question will be based on the Board's glossary of terms and any rubric included with the question.

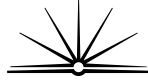
In previous marking operations, some questions had marks allocated in ways that were not explicit or obvious from the question and in some cases, questions were marked out of a different total to the mark value indicated and subsequently re-weighted. In the New HSC, questions are marked out of the mark indicated on the examination paper.

The best practice approaches to HSC marking processes developed over many years will be retained, including double marking and check marking, to ensure that each student's papers are treated fairly. However, in the New HSC the marks have greater meaning in terms of the standards that have been set for each course. 

New HSC Information Kit – what's coming

The Board of Studies is producing a New HSC Information Kit. The package is being prepared to assist principals in providing current information to their school communities during the HSC period. The New HSC Information Kit will contain:

- A series of Fact Sheets that provide concise responses to frequently asked questions
- A summary explaining how syllabus and performance standards are established
- CD-ROM containing
 - A slide show which outlines the key characteristics of the New HSC
 - A revised set of New HSC course descriptions
 - A standards-based New HSC brochure.




Development of an HSC Curriculum Framework in the Entertainment and Music Industry

At its June 2001 meeting, the Board agreed to proceed with the development of a framework in the Entertainment and Music Industry, for implementation from 2003. The framework will cover qualifications drawn from the Entertainment Industry training package and the Music Industry training package. Key stages in the framework development process will be as follows:

- Draft writing brief issued for consultation – 17 September 2001

- Draft syllabus issued for consultation – 25 February 2002
- Framework package issued – May 2002

People with expertise in writing courses or support materials in the areas of Entertainment and/or Music Industry are invited to submit an expression of interest as a curriculum writer for this project. Full details and the application form appeared in a previous issue of the Board Bulletin (Vol 10 no 1). 

Preliminary entries in the New HSC – some observations *continued from page 1*

The growth in Information Technology enrolments reflects the perception in the community that there are significant employment opportunities in the Information Technology industry. The large number of students undertaking Information Technology as part of the HSC could be perceived as beginning to address skills shortages in this industry identified in the NSW Government Information and Communications Technology Skills Action Plan 'Skilling People for an Information Society'.

Technology courses in the New HSC have been reviewed to reflect recent developments in particular fields, including the integration of computer-based technologies and industry practice. The incorporation of project management and team approaches into the syllabuses has made them more appealing to students. In addition, students are aware that these courses can benefit them by providing pathways for further study and employment.

Entries in Software Design and Development have risen by 12% (5 014 in 2000; 5 599 in 2001) in contrast to entries in Information Processes and Technology which have decreased by 5% (14 203 in 2000; 13 512 in 2001).

Textiles and Design entries have increased by 17% from 1 610 in 2000 to 1 878 in 2001. Students may have chosen this course because it better reflects contemporary issues and themes in the textiles industry. Another popular feature of the course is the introduction of a mandatory, externally examined Major Textiles Project which focuses on the design and production of a textile item as well as supporting documentation which shows the inspiration, design development, investigation and manufacturing specification.

There has been an increase of 8% (6380 in 2000 to 6 859 in 2001) in Design and Technology.

Overall entries in the Human Society and its Environment learning area have remained stable although enrolments in individual subjects have fluctuated. For example, even though the number (728) of Year 11 students enrolled in Aboriginal Studies this year is relatively small it is notable that entries have increased by 23% since 2000. Ancient History entries have risen by 11% in contrast to Legal Studies which has experienced a drop of 7%.


Together, the 2001 enrolments in the Modern and Ancient History courses have increased by 5% which means that entries in history have increased by over 1000. This suggests that students who previously would have taken the less challenging 2 Unit general history courses available in the previous HSC are now studying the more rigorous new 2 Unit history courses.

Although the overall Preliminary entries for the more than 50 Languages courses available decreased by 3% in 2001, there are very large variations between courses. One has to be careful when interpreting the figures for Languages because of the very small candidatures of most courses. In fact, currently all except four languages courses – Chinese Background Speakers (1.1% of cohort), French Beginners (1.0% of cohort), French Continuers (1.4% of cohort) and Japanese Continuers (1.5% of cohort) – have a candidature of less than 1% of the cohort. In addition, the total entries for all Languages courses represent only 11.4% of the 2001 cohort.

The greatest growth in entries is in Italian Beginners which rose by 56% from 274 in 2000 to 428 in 2001. Of the two courses with the largest candidatures, enrolments in French Continuers (1040) were relatively stable while Japanese Continuers (1106) experienced a 7% decrease from 2000 to 2001.

There has been a decline of 3% in Science enrolments, which is consistent with trends in Australia and overseas. While it is encouraging that Physics has maintained its share of the total cohort, losses have occurred in Biology (545; 3%) and Chemistry (605; 5%). Even though the total number of students enrolled in both Earth and Environmental Science and Senior Science has decreased by 331, the proportions of the cohorts enrolled in 2000 and 2001 have remained about the same.

Preliminary entries in Community and Family Studies have increased by 4% to 5 056 while Personal Development Health and Physical Education entries have decreased by 2% to 11 965.

While the overall Preliminary entries in Creative Arts courses are stable there have been changes in Dance (with a 23% increase to 659) and in Visual Arts (with a 4% decrease to 12 108) from 2000 to 2001. 

New HSC Standards Packages

The central features of a standards-referenced system of assessing and reporting student achievement are that standards of performance describing different levels of achievement in a course are established and student achievement is measured and reported in terms of these same standards from year to year. This makes it possible to compare the performances of students who have studied a course in different years, even though they will have sat for different Higher School Certificate examinations. The standards-referenced approach also allows for a rich form of reporting where student achievement can be described in terms of statements summarising what students know and can do at each level of performance in the course.

For each Higher School Certificate course descriptions of different standards of performance expected have been written and arranged into bands on the performance scale for that course. These descriptions, together with the examination questions and tasks, and samples of student responses and statistical data that show how students in each band on the performance scale responded to the examination questions will clearly illustrate the performance standards associated with each course.

Teachers and students will have a clearer understanding of what is required of students in order to achieve each standard in a course.

Markers and others responsible for applying the Board's standards-setting procedure each year can use the standards packages to internalise the standards they are to apply when determining the band cut-off marks in the following years.


For each Higher School Certificate course the standards package will be published on a CD-ROM containing:

- Band Descriptions – on the course performance scale: a summary of knowledge, skills and understandings typically demonstrated by students who achieve each band;
- Examination Paper showing each question students were required to answer or task they were required to

perform together with marking guidelines as appropriate;

- Samples of student examination responses at the borderlines on the scale allowing the user to view or hear the responses of a sample of students for selected questions and borderlines.
 - For each section or question (as appropriate) on the examination requiring a written or verbal response or a performance, the responses of several students whose work was of the standard typical of students placed at the borderline between two bands will be provided.
 - Examinations that require a musical, dance or dramatic performance: videos of these performances along with comments from markers will be incorporated.
 - Where students produce a product such as a body of artwork or a design project, images of these works will be provided along with comments from the markers.
- Multiple choice and true/false items. For students at each borderline, a frequency-distribution of responses will be provided for each question. By reading the question and then looking at this student response-data teachers will develop an understanding of how well students at each borderline answered each question and, importantly, the types of errors students tended to make. This analysis will help to provide a 'picture' of the level of knowledge and skills typical of students at each level of performance.

Where there are less than 1 000 Higher School Certificate students studying the course the standards package will have a similar structure, but the samples of student responses will be fewer. For very small candidature courses only a few student responses, together with examiner comments, will be provided.

The standards packages will arrive in schools during Term 1, 2002. 

Advice Line opens early for the New HSC

This year, the opening of the HSC Advice Line has been brought forward. It will now be available two weeks earlier, on September 25, 26, 27 and October 2, 3 and 4.

From October 8, the HSC Advice Line will be open every day. This starting date is consistent with opportunities offered to students in previous years but it is the first time students have been able to call the Advice Line during the holidays.

With the introduction of the first New HSC examinations in 2001, the Advice Line service will provide valuable advice and reassurance to students and help maintain their confidence during their final stages of preparation. Advisers will be able to give expert information on New HSC courses during out-of-school hours and will provide expertise in new areas and texts covered by the curriculum.

The New HSC Advice Line will support 25 of the most popular courses for the HSC, including some Extension courses.

Experienced teachers will provide expert advice on study techniques, revision strategies and preparing for the examination. Students may discuss a full range of topics, including set texts and the Board of Studies specimen examination papers.

The HSC Advice Line has responded to almost 190 000 calls since it began in 1995. The service will cost students only the cost of a local call, no matter where they live in NSW.

The service will be available from 4pm – 10pm on weekdays, 10am – 6pm on Saturdays and from 10am – 10pm on Sundays. Every HSC student will receive their own Advice Line schedule by mail closer to the examinations.

The number to call is 13 11 12. 



Primary Matters

English K–6 CD-ROM of Work Samples

The English K–6 CD-ROM of Work Samples comprises two CD-ROMs, containing an extensive number of work samples and a range of support material for teaching, planning, assessing and reporting in English.

The CD-ROMs include:

- a comprehensive collection of student work samples (print-based, audio and video) from Early Stage 1 to Stage 3 which provide examples of teaching strategies and standards achieved within each stage
- additional support material on Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing
- support material on Grammar and Text Types, and
- proformas for planning, assessing and reporting.

This resource will be a valuable support for teachers when assessing and reporting student progress and achievement of standards described in the English K–6 Syllabus (1998).

Update on Linkages Project


Recently the generic skills program from St Catherine's School, Waverley was added to the case studies section of

the website and the final work samples and units of work have now been added. They include units of work from all stages, illustrated with photographs and identifying where the generic skills are being taught.

Additional research abstracts and references have also been added and the final mapping of verbs across all key learning areas has been added to the generic skills section.

Further information on Linkages projects can be obtained from Suzanne Ziems at ziems@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au, ph (02) 9367 8274 or fax (02) 9367 8476. The Linkages webpage can be found at www.bosnsw-k6.nsw.edu.au

Update on Mathematics K–6 syllabus revision

The draft writing brief for Mathematics K–6 will be in schools in the first week of Term 3. For more information about this refer to the article on Mathematics K–10 Syllabus Development on page 12. If you would like further information regarding these items or K–6 curriculum matters in general, contact Phil Lambert, Inspector, Primary Education, on lambert@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au, ph (02) 9367 8199 or fax (02) 9367 8476. 

Provisions for high ability HSC accelerants in 2002 Distinction Courses

The HSC Distinction Courses Program will be offered again in 2002.

Distinction Courses are challenging university level HSC courses for high ability HSC accelerants. They consist of 2 units of study which are additional to the required 10 units of study for the 2002 HSC. A student who has accelerated may be doing 7 or 8 units of HSC courses in the final year, having already completed 2 or 3 units a year in advance. This allows for a 2 Unit Distinction Course to be included in the student's program. As a general rule a student may only undertake one Distinction Course. Results in Distinction Courses may be counted towards the calculation of the Universities Admission Index (UAI).

Distinction Courses are delivered by universities through distance education, including compulsory residential schools and the internet. They provide an opportunity for a type of study that HSC students may otherwise not gain. They are offered in areas outside the range of existing HSC courses, thus providing a broader perspective across curriculum areas and preparation for future university study.


As in past years the Distinction Courses Program will include courses in Philosophy, Cosmology and Comparative Literature. The courses will be available to eligible students across the state and will be delivered by universities experienced in distance education. It is anticipated that the University of New England will continue to deliver the Philosophy Distinction Course and Charles Sturt University the courses in Cosmology and Comparative Literature.

Student selection criteria, course content, distance education processes and student assessment will follow the same pattern as in previous years.

Full details about the Distinction Courses Program are available on the Board's website at www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au.

An Expression of Interest to undertake a Distinction Course in 2002 was called for by the end of August.

A Distinction Courses Information Day will be held in Sydney on Friday, 16 November.

Contact: (02) 9367 8106 

Establishing Explicit Standards for the New HSC

The reform of the Higher School Certificate has resulted in significant advances towards clearly establishing the standards of performance expected of students in NSW schools.

New South Wales is a leader in standards-based assessment and reporting. New HSC syllabuses and assessment support materials have been developed for each course to support teachers and students in their teaching and learning. The documents provide students with clear descriptions of what is to be learned and how their achievements will be measured. Their HSC credentials will record how well they have performed and what the marks reported actually mean.

In the New HSC student achievement will continue to be assessed using external examinations and school assessments. Standards-based syllabuses and specimen examination papers will assist teachers to teach and assess to the same standards. The new external standards-based examinations will allow students in any course to demonstrate what they know and can do under the same conditions and at the same time.

The process of establishing the standards for the New HSC consists of four distinct stages:

1. Development of syllabus standards
2. Development of course performance standards, comprising descriptions of achievement at band levels alongside a scale that shows a mark of 50 representing the minimum standard expected
3. Development of new standards-based HSC examinations
4. Determination of cut-off marks for each band on the performance scale.

Syllabus standards

The outcomes and content contained in each new syllabus document clearly describe the knowledge, skills and understanding that are expected to be learned by students. These syllabus standards assist teachers and students to understand what students should know and be able to do in each course by the end of Year 12.

Course performance standards

Performance scales have also been developed for each course to assist teachers and students to understand the standards. The course performance scales were developed by teams of experienced teachers using past HSC examination papers, student responses to examination questions and related statistical data. They have also taken account of the new syllabuses and are derived directly from the syllabus outcomes.

The course performance scales comprise six bands with descriptions of performance arranged hierarchically alongside a scale with a mark range of 0-100. A minimum standard expected has been set for each course. Students

will be awarded a mark of 50 or more out of 100 if they reach or exceed the minimum standard.

The performance bands describe what students at each level of achievement typically know and can do in a course. Band 6 standard describes the highest level of achievement and attracts marks between 90 and 100. Band 5 standard describes the next highest level of achievement and attracts marks between 80 and 89 and so on.

The performance standards described in the course performance scale provide meaning to the marks awarded to students. For the first time in 2001, HSC students will receive an HSC mark that points to a band that describes what students at that level of achievement typically know and are able to do in the course.

The HSC mark will show students how well they have performed against the standards described in the syllabus, rather than just comparing them to other students in the course. There will be no pre-determined number of students in each mark range and no limit will be placed on the number of students who can be awarded high marks.

Standards-based HSC examinations

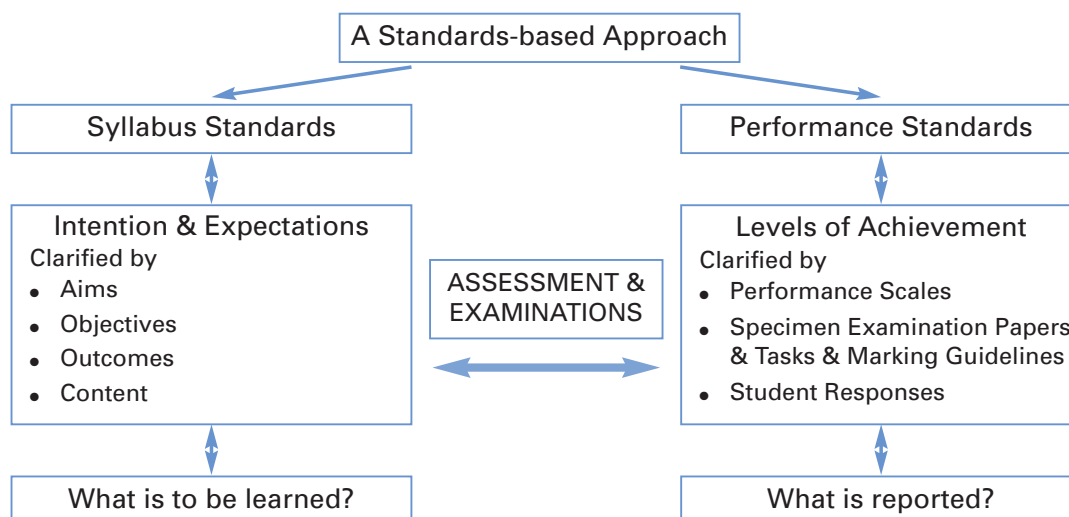
The new standards-based HSC examinations will allow all students to demonstrate their level of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the course standards. In all New HSC examinations:

- different question types will allow students to show what they know and can do;
- instructions and questions will be clear;
- students will know the number of marks allocated to each question;
- the demands of the questions will be explicit;
- students will have a clear sense of what they need to show in their answers in order to earn high marks.

New HSC specimen examination papers and sample marking guidelines have been provided to assist teachers and students to internalise the standards. Following the first HSC examinations in 2001, schools will also have access to examination papers and samples of student responses. The samples will illustrate the quality of the responses typically produced by students whose examination marks have placed them at the borderline between each pair of bands on the performance scale.

The syllabus standards (outcomes and content) together with the performance standards (course performance scales, marking guidelines, sample responses) make explicit for everyone the educational standards expected in NSW schools.

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Ensuring comparability of standards

In order to ensure consistency in the reporting of standards from year to year, the raw examination marks will need to be aligned to the course performance scale in accordance with the actual standards demonstrated by the students in the examination. This means that the raw examination marks obtained by students in a course will not necessarily be the same as the marks reported.

For example, if a student in 2001 achieves a raw mark of 66 in an HSC examination and this is reported as a mark of 70 on the course performance scale, it means that the panel of standards-setting judges have reached the judgement that students who obtained a mark of 66 in the examination have demonstrated the standards described in band 4. In 2002, it is possible that the raw mark that aligns to 70 on the same performance scale might be slightly different. It may be that a mark of at least 69 must be achieved in the examination in 2002 in order for students to demonstrate that standard and so be placed in band 4.

It is the mark on the course performance scale that indicates the standard demonstrated by the student, not the raw mark that the student achieves in the examination. The important message is that all students who are awarded an HSC mark of 70 in either 2001 or 2002 will have been required to demonstrate that they have reached the same standard. In this case, these students will have to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding requirements described in band four.

A comprehensive standards-setting process has to be undertaken as part of the HSC marking operation to align the raw examination marks to the bands on the performance scale. This ensures that the mark awarded to a student in any given year reflects the standard described in the performance band corresponding to that mark.

This is true standards-based assessment. It is a fair and consistent approach for assessing student achievement.

It ensures that the marks awarded for a particular course are related to explicit standards that are comparable from year to year. It also ensures that any student who achieves that band standard is awarded a mark within that band range and does not have their marks scaled down to fit a pre-determined distribution as was the case in the past HSC examinations. The marks and the descriptions accompanying those marks have consistent meaning.

Determination of cut-off marks for each pair of bands on the scale

The aim of the standards-setting process is to determine which raw examination marks relate to standards at the band 6/band 5 borderline, which marks relate to the standards at band 5/band 4 and so forth through to band 2/band 1. The examiners will then be able to 'map' each student's raw examination mark to a standards-based mark on the performance scale.

1. Familiarisation with the band descriptions

First, a small group of experienced judges (markers) reads the band descriptions to help them to develop an understanding of the knowledge, skills and understanding typically held by students in each band. The judges use this information to develop a picture of the students they believe would be on the borderline between each pair of bands, band 6/band 5, band 5/band 4 through to band 2/band 1.

2. Deciding cut-off marks for students on the borderlines

The judges then decide individually what raw mark a borderline student would get on each question in the examination. Cut-off marks for the borderline at each pair of bands are calculated by adding up the raw marks given by the judges for each question.

The judges then compare their cut-off marks with each other and review statistical reports showing how students of different capacity performed on individual questions.

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Establishing Explicit Standards for the New HSC *continued from page 9*

Judges then have the opportunity to modify their original cut-off marks if they wish. A revised set of cut-off marks is produced.

3. *Verification of cut-off marks using sample student responses*

The judges then look at a sample of student responses that have been awarded the cut-off marks as well as responses that fall just above and below the borderline in order to assure themselves that the chosen cut-off marks reflect the standard at each borderline position on the scale.

4. *Final approval of cut-off marks*

The Board's Consultative Committee, whose membership includes measurement experts and Board members, meets with the judging teams and approves the final cut-off marks and the minimum and maximum marks to be awarded for each course.

Aligning raw examination marks to the performance scale

The approved raw cut-off marks for the borderline between each pair of bands are aligned to the performance scale. This results in the band 6/band 5 raw cut-off mark being aligned to a mark of 90 on the scale, band 5/band 4 to 80 through to the band 2/band 1 cut-off mark being aligned to a mark of 50. Raw marks between the cut-off marks are then aligned appropriately to the performance scale. This ensures that the HSC marks awarded to students actually


reflect the descriptions in the course performance bands corresponding to those marks.

The band descriptions are reviewed to ensure that they accurately reflect the standards of performance demonstrated in the responses.

Benchmarking standards using student responses at band borderlines

The student responses representing borderline achievement between the bands are kept as benchmarks for future examinations so that valid judgements about standards over time can be made. This will ensure that students demonstrating equivalent standards in a course from year to year receive a similar mark.

Reporting the HSC Mark

The HSC Mark on the course report is a 50:50 combination of the external HSC examination mark and school assessment mark. The assessment marks submitted by schools for each course will continue to be moderated by the external examination performance of the school group. The moderated school assessment mark and the examination mark after they have been aligned to the standards on the performance scale will be averaged. This result is the HSC Mark reported on the course report. 

Review of Years 7–10 Syllabuses

The State budget provided \$27 million to support the revision of the Years 7–10 curriculum, with \$3.8 million being provided in 2001/2002 to the Board of Studies to immediately commence the program. The revision of the Years 7–10 syllabuses will be completed by mid-2003.

The new syllabuses will mean that students will be acquiring contemporary subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding as well as developing and enhancing their learning skills. Teachers will be developing and delivering learning programs that are based on up-to-date syllabuses that reflect the most recent understanding about what and how students should learn.

The review of 7–10 syllabuses will complete a cycle of syllabus revision that commenced with the K–6 English syllabus in 1995 and that, in recent years, has focused on the HSC syllabuses.

In an era being characterised by change and in which employment prospects are being seen as intimately tied to new knowledge-based skills, there is a need for curriculum to prepare students for continuous access to education and training opportunities.

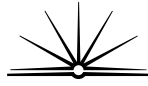
The key foundations of learning involving literacy and numeracy have been emphasised in the revision of K–6 syllabuses and will continue to be a focus of the Years 7–10 syllabuses being reviewed. The New HSC syllabuses have been developed to provide strong entry points for employment, further training and higher education as well as preparation for lifelong learning for full and active participation as citizens.

It is recognised that the 7–10 period is critical in the consolidation of learning skills and attitudes towards learning and that curriculum and pedagogy need to ensure engagement and participation. Students have to acquire subject-specific and general knowledge as well as developing ways of handling change and new technology. The curriculum needs to accommodate differing pathways to ensure opportunities for all students to participate.

The revision of the Years 7–10 syllabuses will ensure that there is developmental continuity in the passage from the primary years through the compulsory years 7–10 and on to the post-compulsory years of schooling.

The Board's K–10 curriculum framework, the second version of which was subject to consultation across the State in the

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latter half of Term 2, will guide the revision of the Years 7–10 syllabuses. The curriculum framework will provide:

- a purpose statement that establishes expectations for the educational opportunities to be provided by Board syllabuses;
- broad learning outcomes that represent a holistic set of knowledge, skills, understanding and values that are seen to be essential for all students if they are to succeed in and beyond schooling; and
- principles that provide the foundation for the teaching and learning that is to occur as a consequence of the Board's syllabuses.

The purpose statement, broad learning outcomes and principles will be used to evaluate existing syllabuses and to guide the development of new syllabuses.

The framework and the Board syllabus and assessment model will ensure that there is greater consistency and coherence across syllabuses and that each syllabus provides for continuity of learning across K–10. Once completed, the Years 7–10 syllabuses will complete a K–12 standards framework that will assist teachers and students to monitor progress and will also assist with the reporting of student achievement to students, parents and school communities.

Consultation on the Years 7–10 English syllabus writing brief occurred in the second half of Term 2 and the draft Years K–10 Mathematics syllabus writing brief is currently in schools for consultation between 23 July and 4 August.

A program for the revision of other Years 7–10 syllabuses along with advance notice of consultation periods will be distributed to schools later this year. 

2001 HSC examination papers


The layout and format of the 2001 HSC examination papers have been designed to assist students in working through the papers. As far as possible, the wording of instructions is consistent across all examinations. On the cover of each examination paper, there are general instructions that apply to the paper, as well as a 'map' of the paper, showing the various parts of the examination, the marks allocated, and a suggested time allocation.

To further aid students, all parts of examinations that they are required to hand in will be printed on buff-coloured paper. This includes the covers of the writing booklets that will be provided. Any parts of examination papers that may be removed from the examination room will be printed on white paper.

Where space has been provided on examination papers for students to write their answers, the number of lines allowed indicates the length of response that would be expected.

Where students have very large handwriting, they may need to go beyond the space allocated and, in some cases, may need to ask for a writing booklet to complete their answers.

The specimen HSC examination papers indicate the layout and format that will be used for the 2001 HSC examination papers. The specimen papers were sent to schools in March 2000 and are available on the Board's website. Teachers should ensure that students are familiar with the specimen papers in each of their subjects. Please note that the sample HSC examinations in the Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplements (EARS), which were published for each syllabus in 1999, have been superseded by the specimen examinations.

For further information, contact Garry Webb in Assessment Branch on (02) 9367 8093, or by e-mail at webbg@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au. 

New HSC Course on Science of the Mind

For the first time, HSC students will study the 'science of the mind' as part of a new Cognitive Science course, scheduled for implementation from 2003. The new course will be evidence-based and incorporate contemporary understanding of how the brain works and how people learn, derived from cognitive science and neuropsychology.

Practical work will be developed in areas such as:

- concepts in artificial intelligence
- types of memory
- how information is received, interpreted and retained
- the acquisition of basic skills of speech and reading.

The course will give Year 12 students interested in teaching, social science and behavioural science the opportunity to study how the brain functions and how learning takes place.

Mathematics K–10 Syllabus Development

A significant point in the review and development of Mathematics K–10 Syllabuses was reached recently with the completion and release of the draft Mathematics K–10 syllabus writing brief.

A project team of eight primary and secondary educators has developed the draft writing brief, which includes a draft scope and continuum for Mathematics K–10. The brief, as well as being distributed in hard copy, has been placed on the Board's website for consultation. This is an important consultation document, as it will provide the proposed 'blueprint' for the new Mathematics K–6 and 7–10 syllabuses.


Following consultation, the writing brief will be finalised to provide clear directions to the writers of the new syllabuses. The Mathematics K–10 scope and continuum provides an opportunity for teachers to view the mathematics learning of students from Kindergarten to Year 10 and comment on things such as:

- the proposed content and its placement on the continuum
- working mathematically
- sample outcomes.

The consultation period for the draft document is 23 July – 24 August 2001. Survey responses may be submitted electronically through the website, or in hard copy. Additional consultation will be undertaken during August and will include meetings of teacher focus groups in various locations around the State.

A consultation report will be presented with the writing brief at the Board meeting in September. The development of Mathematics K–6 and 7–10 syllabus documents is scheduled to commence following endorsement of the writing brief.

Mathematics K–10 Syllabus Development on the website

Up-to-date information about the development of Mathematics K–6 and 7–10 syllabuses can be found in the 'What's New?' section of the Board's website (www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au) under Mathematics K–10 Review. The information provided includes the proceedings of the Mathematics K–10 Symposium held at Lucas Heights Community School in February. 

What's New on the BOS website this month

This **Board Bulletin** (and all previous ones) as well as the **Official Notices** are available online at http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/docs_bulletins/bbull1.html. You will also find a cumulative list of all Official Notices for 1999–2001.

The **2001 HSC Timetable** can be found at http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/aa_main/hsc_timetable2001.html.

The 142-page **revised New HSC Course Descriptions** file can be downloaded in MS Word, RTF or Acrobat PDF format from http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus99/syllabus2000_list.html#hscinfo.

University Developed Board Endorsed Courses in the New HSC. In recent years increasing numbers of university courses have been offered as Board Endorsed Courses. Board Endorsed Courses provide the opportunity to extend the curriculum in areas not covered by Board Developed Courses. The Guidelines and Application Forms can be downloaded from <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/docs/docs.html>.

School Developed Board Endorsed VET (Vocational Education and Training) Courses. A School Developed VET Course provides students with recognised vocational outcomes as well as meeting Board of Studies requirements for endorsement and credentialling as a Preliminary and/or HSC course. The Guidelines and Application Forms can be downloaded from <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/docs/docs.html>.

The Minister's Young Designers Awards 2001 Information Booklet can be downloaded from <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/docs/docs.html>. The Minister's Young Designers Awards (MYDA) encourage students to look at the world around them, to investigate products, systems and environments, and to design a successful solution in an area of interest to them.

Creative Arts K–6 Resources for teaching Visual Arts, Music, Drama and Dance can be found at http://www.bosnsw-k6.nsw.edu.au/arts/arts_index.html. This document lists resources that teachers can access to enhance their teaching and learning in Visual Arts, Music, Drama and Dance.