

Board Bulletin



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Components of new HSC announced

A single, 2 unit course structure will be the feature of the new HSC. For the majority of HSC subjects, there will be one 2 unit course. Separate 3 unit courses will be removed, but the outcomes of the current 3 unit courses will be included in the new 2 unit courses.

One of the benefits of this new structure is that students will have improved access to courses, which will make the HSC fairer and more equitable. Currently, many schools are not able to offer students all of the existing 3 unit courses. The single course structure will provide a more streamlined framework, improving schools' ability to timetable a wide range of courses.

Changes to assessment and reporting procedures will see students' results reported against standards, not against the results of other students in their year.

'It is fairer and more meaningful to report student achievement in terms of the standards they have met,' Professor Gordon Stanley, President of the Board of Studies, said.

This means parents, teachers and employers will have a clear understanding of each student's knowledge, skills and understanding in each course.

'At the end of 13 years of schooling it is important to know what a student has actually learnt, not just how they compare with other students. And that is what the new assessment and reporting will show.'

In a small number of subjects — English, Mathematics, History, Music, some Languages and Vocational Education and Training courses — it has been agreed that more than a single 2 unit course is required. These subjects have some or all of the following characteristics:

- a need for additional time for students to develop the skills necessary for higher levels of achievement;
- particular value as a foundation for a wide range of tertiary studies;
- large candidatures;
- a current HSC provision of three or more courses, each with distinct purposes for students.

Information on the new HSC has been sent to schools.

Statewide community meetings will give the ABC on the new HSC

More than 140 community meetings on the new HSC are being held across the State during August and September.

The meetings are for parents, particularly those with a child in Year 7, 8 or 9, and other community members who would like more detailed information on the new HSC for Year 11 in 2000.

Experienced staff from the Office of the Board of Studies and the Department of Education and Training will explain the changes set to take the HSC into the new millennium.

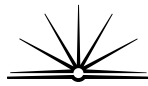
The meetings will take parents through changes to the course structure for the new HSC and provide information on the new assessment and reporting procedures.

A letter and brochures on the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate have been sent to parents with a child in Year 7, 8 or 9, explaining the changes to the HSC and advising them of the community meetings. Parents have been asked to check with their school for information on the location and date of their local meeting.

The meetings will be cross-sectoral and will be attended by the Board of Studies Liaison Officer, the District Superintendent and representatives from the Catholic and Independent school systems.

Statewide meetings on the new HSC for teachers and principals will be held in Term 4.

For further information, contact your Board of Studies Liaison Officer.



President's Message



Following the announcement of the new HSC structure, work on the new syllabus arrangements is progressing rapidly. Draft writing briefs will be in schools for consultation for four weeks between September and November this year. The writing brief provides information on the topic areas to be covered by the syllabus writers. Depending on feedback, the writing brief may undergo considerable change before the draft syllabus is produced. Draft syllabuses will be in schools for four weeks' consultation between February and April 1999. The timetable for specific courses will be publicised.

The Board appreciates the amount of time teachers have put into their responses to curriculum changes. The new process of syllabus development provides opportunities for teachers to understand the direction of change and to give constructive input to help achieve an effective outcome. While the History 7–10 writing brief has proved to be controversial, teachers will see that the process of feedback has resulted in considerable changes to the draft syllabus. In considering such changes, the Board has had to balance divergent opinions while ensuring integrity of standards and achievable outcomes.

During the next couple of months I will be involved in a large number of meetings to explain the changes to the HSC. This is part of a communication strategy to inform teachers, parents and other interested members of the community of the changes. We are keen to let everyone know how we will ensure that the HSC continues to embrace high standards while becoming fairer and more relevant to the needs of students in the 21st century.

As a newcomer, I have only had a relatively brief association with John Cook. I am aware of the tremendous contribution he has made to the HSC in NSW over a long period. His technical expertise, personal qualities and commitment are legendary and he is fondly regarded by all his colleagues, who wish him well in retirement as he takes up new challenges.

(Professor) Gordon Stanley

Consultation on draft writing briefs

The draft writing briefs for the English and Science Stage 6 syllabuses have been sent to schools for consultation.

Both writing briefs are accompanied by a survey, giving teachers the opportunity to comment on their direction, which in turn will guide the development of the syllabuses. Final writing briefs will be prepared, taking into account the feedback received from teachers.

The new English syllabus will include courses for:

- English Stage 6 (Standard)
- English Stage 6 (Advanced)
- Fundamentals of English Stage 6 (Preliminary only)
- English Stage 6 (Extension).

There will be a separate writing brief for English as a Second Language.

The new Science syllabuses will cover courses in:

- Applied Science Stage 6
- Biology Stage 6
- Chemistry Stage 6
- Earth and Environmental Science Stage 6
- Physics Stage 6.

New Board members appointed

Ten new members were appointed to the Board of Studies last month, while 13 members were reappointed. The current membership is:

Professor Gordon Stanley (President)

Dr Jim McMorrow Ms Jozefa Sobski* Mr Trevor Wootten*
(nominees of the Director-General of Education and Training and Managing Director, TAFE NSW).

Professor Robert Castle (NSW Vice Chancellors Committee)

Mr Ian Morris (Council of the Federation of P&C Associations of NSW, representing parents of primary school children)

Ms Dianne Butland (Council of the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, representing parents of secondary school children)

Dr Brian Croke (Catholic Education Commission of NSW)

Ms Jo Karaolis (Association of Independent Schools, the Headmasters' Conference and the Association of Heads of Independent Girls Schools)

Ms Sandra White — non-government school teacher (Independent Education Union)

Ms Caroline Benedet* — parent of a child attending a non-government school (Catholic Education Commission, NSW and the NSW Parents Council)

Ms Adele Mazoudier* — principal of a government school (NSW Council of Primary School Principals)

Ms Judith King* — principal of a government school (NSW Council of Secondary Principals)

Ms Kathy Deacon* — government school teacher (NSW Teachers Federation — primary)

Ms Mary Fogarty — government school teacher (NSW Teachers Federation — secondary)

Dr Sue Dockett — person with knowledge and expertise in early childhood education

Mr Charles Davison* — Aboriginal person with knowledge and expertise in the education of Aboriginal people

Dr Gregory Hotchkis Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian Dr Anne Benjamin*
Ms Dagmar Schmidmaier* Dame Leonie Kramer Ms Dorothy Hoddinott*

(nominees of the Minister for Education, having, in the Minister's opinion, qualifications or experience that enables them to make a valuable contribution to primary or secondary education in NSW).

* denotes new member



Primary Matters

Mathematics Outcomes and Indicators

Many schools have welcomed the release of *Mathematics K–6 Outcomes and Indicators* as an opportunity to revisit the Mathematics key learning area. In particular, the focus has been on *Working Mathematically*. This strand reflects the section of the Mathematics K–6 Syllabus on problem solving and technology. The structure of this strand makes clear the skills, knowledge and understandings to be developed in the problem-solving process, as well as the place of technology, especially computers and calculators, through the stage outcomes. The six sequences presented in the *Working Mathematically* strand have increased attention on how students learn mathematics.

A number of schools are planning workshops for parents on outcomes in Mathematics. The Office of the Board of Studies is developing a brochure, with the assistance of parent groups, to assist this process. The brochure will be sent to schools in Term 4. Each school will receive a master copy that can be copied and distributed to parents as needed.

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

The draft Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K–6 Syllabus is currently being revised by a project team. The number of outcomes is being reduced from the 1992 draft, and the revised outcomes are being trialled by teachers across the State.

At the same time, a variety of student work samples are being collected from schools. The final syllabus and support document will include many of these work samples.

Science and Technology

Support material for Science and Technology K–6 is on the Board's website. *Science and Technology K–6: Updates from the Classroom* looks at 'Engaging Students in the Design Process', and features a Year 5/6 class from Penshurst West Public School working on a unit on 'Space'. Part 1 of this article focuses on the background, unit tasks and investigation prior to designing and making. Part 2 concerns modelling the design process and collaborative planning and design. The final part will be on the website soon. Visit the Board website at <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au> and go to K–6 News, under Science and Technology.

Special Education

Copies of the two special education interim support documents, *Literacy* and *Communication*, were distributed to schools in March 1997. Both documents are highly regarded in schools and are viewed by teachers as sound resources for students with special education needs. The documents are available for \$8.

If you would like to purchase further copies, please contact:

Client Services
Board of Studies NSW
GPO Box 5300
Sydney NSW 2001
Fax: (02) 9262 6270



Review puts HSC assessment program to the test

Teachers and students are very much in favour of the current HSC assessment program, according to a recent review conducted by the Board.

The review involved a number of focus group meetings with teachers and students, a survey of schools and regional seminars across the State, attended by over 600 teachers and principals.

The aim of the review was to examine current assessment practices in schools and to use the information gained to improve assessment procedures for the new HSC.


The review found that teachers and students are very supportive of the current assessment program. Students were also very positive about the ability of their teachers to assess their work properly and fairly.

Feedback from teachers indicates that they would like advice from the Board on the number of assessment tasks that should be held. The number of assessment

tasks varies across subjects and schools, and many teachers would like the Board to specify the number.

Director of Examinations and Assessment, Mr John Cook, said it is likely the Board will recommend a suitable range, rather than an exact figure, for the number of assessment tasks. This will allow schools to maintain the flexibility that currently exists with the assessment program. The Board will also look at the possibility of introducing further non-test-based tasks, such as projects and fieldwork.

Schools have also asked for more advice on how to conduct their assessment programs. Mr Cook said he expects the Board will be able to provide schools with best-practice examples to assist them with their assessment programs.

The review report will provide a snapshot of current HSC assessment procedures and recommendations for the future. 

'Mr HSC' retires



The Director of Examinations and Assessment for the Office of the Board of Studies, Mr John Cook, retired in August after 37 years working in education.

John has seen many changes in education, including the introduction of the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate. Some of the changes he has been

directly involved with include the introduction of the school estimate, and then school assessment, as a component of the HSC, and the use of Course Performance Descriptors for all School Certificate elective courses. Accelerated and accumulated 'pathways' to the HSC were another initiative, as was the introduction of country marking for the HSC. And of course, he was responsible for designing the original scaling system for the HSC. It's not surprising, therefore, that he is often referred to as 'Mr HSC'.

Education is not the only thing that has changed over the years.

'At first, I used to get a buzz out of designing statistical procedures. Then it was making sure we met budget. But for a long time now it has been the human side that I enjoy most,' Mr Cook said.

'One of the HSC's strongest features is that even though the system is very large and very complex, we haven't lost sight of the fact that every student is an individual, not just a candidate number. The care our people take, you'd think it was their own child's papers.'

It is this human touch that John Cook is probably best known for. He has been instrumental in improving the range of special provisions categories for the SC and HSC to cater for the growing number of students with identified special needs, and has assisted thousands of students through his sympathetic management of special examination provisions and illness/misadventure appeals for the HSC.

After almost 4 decades in education, the term 'public servant' fits very well with what John Cook has achieved. 