

# Board Bulletin



BOARD OF STUDIES NSW

May 1999 – Vol 8 No 4

## A behind-the-scenes look at the School Certificate testing and reporting system

For the first time last year, students sitting for the School Certificate tests received detailed information about their performance assessed against clearly defined standards.

Craig Mundy, an English teacher at Menai High School, who has been involved in setting the standards for English-literacy from the start, says that the purpose of the standards-referenced approach is to establish a way of assessing and describing to teachers what students should be able to demonstrate as they achieve outcomes in English literacy.

'Standards-based reporting provides students, teachers, parents and potential employers with a more accurate picture of the students' skills,' said Mr Mundy.

'This process started with a committee set up about 18 months ago to look at a scope statement for developing the new School Certificate test in English literacy. The committee included a broad cross-section of teachers because it was important that we had a range of talents and experiences to set

standards achievable by the full range of students in Year 10.

'The statewide standards are summarised on a Performance Scale with six bands, band 6 being the highest and band 2 being the minimum standard expected. Each band describes the skills, knowledge and understanding expected at each level.'

The standards-referenced approach measures student performance, not against the performance of other students in the group, but against levels of achievement that remain consistent from year to year. The performance of a candidate is assessed and placed within a band where the description best fits their achievement in the test.

Mr Mundy said the committee experienced a number of challenges in arriving at the descriptions for each band. 'One of the challenges was for all members of the committee to agree on a set of descriptions for each band in the English-literacy test that satisfies teachers, students, parents and the general public.

'The bands and descriptions were developed over

*continued page 5*




## K-6 Linkages Update

The Linkages section of the Board of Studies website has had a facelift. The menu has been redesigned to aid navigation through each part of the section and a new area has been added. The new section includes examples of how computer-based technology can be used when students are working towards the achievement of the English K-6 Talking and Listening outcomes. Similar information will soon be included for the Reading and Writing strands and for other key learning areas.

Cross-curriculum linkage activities that will be undertaken in 1999 include mapping information skills, numeracy, fine motor skills, generic skills (eg communicating, problem solving, evaluating, task management, cooperating with others) and broad concepts (eg 'Change', 'Patterns', 'Built Environments')

that span K-6 syllabuses.

In addition to providing information on the website, the Linkages project also involves reporting on approaches to curriculum integration. Summaries of some recent research reports and information about the work being undertaken in some NSW primary schools have been added to the existing research section of the website. Two schools from the Broken Bay Diocese will soon be featured on the website. Teachers from these schools have been using Linkages material as a focus for their planning in Term 1. Their thoughts and experiences will be included on the website following the implementation of their programs this term.

The Linkages project can be accessed at the Board's website at <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au> 

## HSC and SC Important Dates

### Year 10

- 18 Jun** Final date for Board Endorsed Course applications to Board of Studies Liaison Officer
- 21 Jun** Submit amendments to entry forms
- 26-29 Jun** Board Endorsement Panel meeting to consider all new course applications
- 4 Aug** Dispatch Principals' 'N' determination forms

### Year 11

- 11 Jun** Dispatch confirmation of entry schedules
- 18 Jun** Final date for Board Endorsed Course applications to Board of Studies Liaison Officer
- 26-29 Jun** Board Endorsement Panel meeting to consider all new course applications
- 2 Jul** Submit amendments to entry forms
- 4 Aug** Dispatch Principals' 'U' determination forms

### Year 12

- 18 Jun** Final date for submission of Board Endorsed Course applications to Board of Studies Liaison Officer
- 26-29 Jun** Board Endorsement Panel meeting to consider all new course applications
- 19 Jul** Dispatch Illness/Misadventure forms
- 23 Jul** Last date for submission of changes to HSC Music and Drama course options

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## Board assistance for implementation of the new HSC

The Board of Studies NSW is taking a number of initiatives to assist schools with the implementation of the new HSC to be introduced in Year 11 next year.

An information package will be released at the end of May that will contain descriptions of all Board Developed Courses and Content Endorsed Courses.

The kit, available on CD-ROM, will also contain a set of easy-to-understand overhead transparencies to help

teachers present information sessions on the HSC and subject selection. Schools will be able to add their own sections to the package, with descriptions of specific benefits they can offer students.

A brochure for parents will also be included in the package. It will describe the new arrangement and explain the new credentials — HSC, Record of Achievement and Course Report. 

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



*This and next month are particularly busy for the Board as many aspects of the HSC reform process come together. The cooperation of so many people in ensuring that issues are debated and responded to within the framework*

*adopted by the Board has been a remarkable achievement. The process of consultation has provided us with very useful advice and information about syllabus packages and continues to allow for change and improvement.*

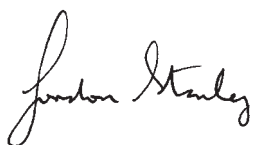
*The April meeting of the Board approved for recommendation to the Minister the first six syllabuses completed according to our published schedule. They are on track for delivery to schools in early June.*

*In this Bulletin announcements are made about patterns of study and transition arrangements for the new HSC. In keeping with the objectives of the new HSC, the breadth of study requirements now approved by the Minister allows for greater flexibility than is the case at present.*

*Cross-sector cooperation has been a feature in the development of training and development activities to support schools and teachers. Senior officers from the Board have been involved in working on this project. A special emphasis has been given to needs associated with those syllabuses having significant change, such as Science and English.*

*An information package for Principals and Curriculum Coordinators has been trialled and will be in schools at the end of May. This will be of particular assistance in the development of advice to students and parents.*

*While the Board has an enormous amount of HSC-focused activity in the next few months, the April meeting also approved some strategic directions for the future. The transition from primary to the middle years of schooling and smooth transitions between school and post-school opportunities for employment and further education and training need to be addressed across the sectors. They are a major priority for us all.*



(Professor) Gordon Stanley

## HSC Mathematics Syllabus Consultation

The Board's decision to develop a single course in non-calculus-based mathematics was made as a result of the White Paper's finding that excessive differentiation has led to doubts about quality at the lower end of a series of courses, and that students undertaking such courses are not sufficiently challenged.

The Board's evaluation of the Mathematics in Practice course has found that much of the material is less demanding than that in the School Certificate Standard course, and that it does not satisfy the criteria for an HSC course under the new structure.


The Board is also keen to reverse the decline in the numbers of students enrolled in the more challenging 2 unit, 3 unit and 4 unit courses in Mathematics. Since 1990, there has been a drop from 39% to 28% of students enrolled in 2 Unit Mathematics.

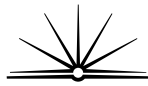
One of the major concerns explored by teachers appears to be that students currently enrolled in Mathematics in Practice would be unable to cope with Mathematical Measurement and Modelling. It is not the Board's objective to discourage students from studying mathematics, but there is concern about providing students with a too-easy option simply so that they can satisfy the requirements for the award of the Higher School Certificate.

Mathematical Measurement and Modelling complements the other Stage 6 Mathematics courses by catering for the wide variation in students' mathematical abilities at the end of Year 10.

The main purpose of the course is to provide a solid grounding in mathematics for students who do not wish to continue the formal study of mathematics or mathematics-based courses beyond Stage 6. To this end, the syllabus focuses on mathematical skills and techniques which have direct application to everyday activities.

It provides opportunities for continuing mathematical development and gives students a number of choices to help them fulfil their vocational goals in areas as diverse as accounting, business, humanities, nursing and paramedical sciences.

The Board values highly the feedback received from teachers during consultation and will be looking at incorporating their views to provide a high standard syllabus that is accessible to all students. 



# Primary Matters

## Evaluation Criteria for K–6 Syllabuses

Evaluation criteria are currently being developed by the Board of Studies to guide project teams in the evaluation of K–6 syllabuses. In effect, the criteria will be the terms of reference used to evaluate the syllabuses and syllabus support documents. Consultation with key K–6 organisations on the proposed criteria will take place this term.

When finalised, the criteria will assist the Board to undertake a consistent and comprehensive approach to the evaluation of primary syllabus documents.

The evaluation of all K–6 syllabuses is to be undertaken in accordance with agreed schedules and in keeping with the Board's syllabus development process. The Board has determined that an evaluation of the *Mathematics K–6 Syllabus* will commence in 1999 and the *Science and Technology K–6 Syllabus* in 2000.

## State Syllabus Documents

From time to time schools make enquiries regarding the current status of curriculum documents. The following syllabus documents are the current public documents in use in schools in each key learning area:

### English

- *English K–6 Syllabus* (1998) – released in 1998

### Mathematics

- *Mathematics K–6 Syllabus* (1989) – released in 1989
- *Mathematics K–6 Outcomes and Indicators Addendum* (1998) – released in 1998

## Science and Technology

- *Science and Technology K–6 Syllabus and Support Document* (1991) — released in 1991

## Human Society and Its Environment

- *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Syllabus* (1998) — released in 1999

## Personal Development, Health and Physical Education


- *Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K–6 Draft Syllabus* (1992) — a final syllabus is scheduled for release this term.

## Creative and Practical Arts

- *Music K–6 Syllabus* (1984)
- *Visual Arts K–6 Syllabus* (1989).

The Creative Arts K–6 Draft Syllabus and its accompanying support document were released to schools in December 1998 for consultation in 1999. The final syllabus is scheduled for release at the end of 1999.

It is important to emphasise that schools and school systems are responsible for the implementation of syllabuses. School systems have their own curriculum policies governing both system-determined curriculum initiatives and priorities, and their particular approach to the use of each Board syllabus.

If you would like further information regarding these items or K–6 curriculum matters in general, contact Phil Lambert, Inspector, Primary Education, ph (02) 9367 8199 or fax (02) 9367 8476. 


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## K–6 Creative Arts update

Schools received copies of the Creative Arts K–6 Draft Syllabus and Creative Arts K–6 Draft Support Documents in December 1998. These documents are available for trialling during 1999. Thirty schools have been randomly selected to trial these documents more intensively during Term 2, 1999.

All schools will receive a survey during Term 2 that will ask teachers to comment on the effectiveness of the syllabus and support documents. Survey responses will

be used to amend the syllabus and support documents during Term 3.

Additional information about the Creative Arts K–6 Draft Syllabus, Creative Arts K–6 Draft Support Documents and the trialling and consultation of these documents may be obtained from Julie Stevens, Inspector, Creative Arts, Office of the Board of Studies, e-mail [stevens@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au](mailto:stevens@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au), phone (02) 9367 8161, fax (02) 9367 8476. 

## A behind-the-scenes look at the School Certificate testing and reporting system

*continued from page 1*

many meetings spread over the entire period that the committee sat.

'We found it hard to compose a concise and meaningful description of skills, knowledge and understanding that is clear to students and the general public and yet satisfies the professional expectations of teachers.

'It was also a challenge to define the changes that occur in the level of achievement from one band to another,' Mr Mundy said.

Mr Mundy said various groups including the Test Committee, Board of Studies officers and senior markers were invited to respond to the draft band descriptions at each point in the planning process and refinements were made.

Another one of the challenges was to decide on the nature of the external test and to set tasks that would effectively test a broad subset of the outcomes defined by the syllabus.

Similarly, the test needed to be pitched at a level that would enable students of all levels of ability to display their knowledge and skills.

'We also needed to give markers a set of marking criteria for the written responses which differentiate effectively between student performances in each band.'

'Another benefit of having this system is that markers will reward answers that meet the criteria rather than simply ranking students.

'Markers will be given a set of sample responses that reflect the performance expected in each band and this standard will remain consistent from year to year.

'Refinement is ongoing and the nature of the testing material and marking criteria used to accurately

assess student performance will continue to be refined – these are critical areas and we must ensure that they are effective and reliable.

'Generally, the response from the education community has been very positive. Teachers realise that they will benefit from this new system which gives them a set of standards that will remain consistent over time.' Mr Mundy said there were also challenges in aligning students' test marks for the first time to the performance scale for English literacy.


In the English-literacy test, for example, there are a number of separate tasks assessing performance based on different indicators. These results are combined finally to produce a single total mark.

A committee of senior markers determines the mark at which students move up to a new band and therefore a new band description.

'This is a complex and time-consuming task, particularly when taking into account the variety of ways a student may achieve their allocated mark.

'Students will benefit from this new system which will provide them with a positive statement of achievement, and this form of assessment will remain consistent from year to year.

'Teachers will need to become familiar with the standards-referenced form of assessment and make students aware of how it operates. Students need to be informed of the criteria being applied to a task and taught how to focus on their performance relating to those requirements.

'The English-literacy test is designed to reflect accurately what is being taught in classrooms throughout NSW,' Mr Mundy said. 

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## NSW students have their say at Schools National Constitutional Convention

NSW students have played a major role in contributing to the future of Australia's constitution at this year's Schools National Constitutional Convention held at the Senate Chamber of the Old Parliament House, Canberra from 12 to 14 May.

Professor Gordon Stanley, President of the Board of Studies NSW, said the National Convention was an excellent opportunity for young people to discuss constitutional issues in a non-partisan environment.

'NSW was strongly represented at this year's National Convention with 32 senior student delegates from across the state meeting to discuss "The Referendum and Citizenship",' he said.

'The convention provided students with an invaluable opportunity to explore constitutional issues that underpin the workings of this country.

'One of the issues they considered, as we near the 100th anniversary of the Australian Constitution, is whether or not the original document is an accurate representation of today's society.

'Students were able to debate these issues in an impartial environment with the benefit of having accurate and independent information about Australia's constitution.

'Whichever side of the debate students chose to represent, their arguments were always well-

*continued page 6*



## Now Available

### 1998 HSC Sample Answers

Legal Studies	\$15
English 2/3U Common and 3U	\$15
Ancient History	\$15
Studies of Religion	\$15

Watch for our order form — take advantage of our new titles.

### PDHPE K–6 Teaching Kit titles \$15 each

The three new [final] titles for the PDHPE K–6 teaching kit are now available. They address the Growth and Development syllabus strand:

I Am Special [Stage 1]

Growing Self [Stage 2]

Getting It Together [Stage 3].

Brochures/Order Forms will be coming to your school so you can complete your set of these excellent resources. There are nine titles in all — three in each of the syllabus strands.

## Available Soon

### HSC CD-ROM: 1995 to 1998

\$25 each

Examination Papers from each of these years (except for non-Romanic scripts or parts of papers for which we have not been able to obtain copyright clearance for use other than at the actual examination, including some selected examination reports), will be available on CD-ROM from the Board of Studies by the end of May 1999. Three copies will be sent to each school but extra copies may be purchased at \$25 each. Please let your students know about this excellent HSC resource — it gives a very wide range of example papers for them to incorporate into their study plans.

### Contact Information


To place an order or to inquire about products and services you can contact Client Services by:

Fax: (02) 9262 6270, or

Tel: (02) 9367 8178, or

e-mail [clientservices@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au](mailto:clientservices@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au) or write to Client Services at GPO Box 5300 Sydney 2001.

Please supply an official purchase order or have credit card details available. There is a postage charge of \$4 for one item or \$8 for two or more items.

Enquiries: (02) 9367 8331 Helen Kerr, Leader/Client Services Section. 

## NSW students have their say at National Schools Constitutional Convention *continued from page 5*

constructed, informative and lively.

‘The National Convention was a great way for students to develop a full-rounded education in order to take their role as citizens of this country. It provides them with a first-rate opportunity to understand the importance of civic duty and Australia’s constitution.

‘By participating in the convention, students are helping to increase community awareness of key

constitutional issues and it’s wonderful to see students interacting with the wider community in a public forum,’ Professor Stanley said.

The next round of regional conventions will start with the Metropolitan Convention at Blacktown Council Chambers on Friday, 13 August, followed by the State Convention at Sydney’s Parliament House on Monday, 22 November.

## NSW Students Attending the National Constitutional Convention

Aaron Wardle, *Girraween High School*

Omar Rodriguez, *St Andrews College, Marayong*

Tariq Shafei, *Condell Park High School*

Emil Tahtouh, *Patrician Brothers College, Blacktown*

Katie Williams, *St Patricks Marist College, Dundas*

Robert Day, *St Patricks College, Sutherland*

Daniel Sumpton, *Normanhurst Boys High School*

Stephanie Ng, *North Sydney Girls High School*

Alyson Eather, *Tara Anglican School for Girls*

Therese Phu, *All Saints Senior Catholic College, Casula, Liverpool*

Amor Toohey, *Burwood Girls High School*

Melissa Hawley, *Kirrawee High School*

Alexandra Tess Diana Walker, *Newtown High School of Performing Arts*

Christopher Urquhart, *Waverley College, Waverley*

Adam D’Andreti, *North Sydney Boys High School*

Natalie Ings, *East Hills Girls Technology High School*

Katherine Wilkinson, *Cherrybrook Technology High School*

Jennifer Daylight, *Canterbury Girls High School*

Benjamin Saab, *St Andrews Cathedral, Sydney*

Robert Boland-Freitas, *Christian Bros., Lewisham*

Travis Vella, *Kyogle High School*

Penelope Grist, *Lismore High School*

Kimberley Smith, *Woodenbong Central School*

Phillip McCall, *The Broadmeadow School*

Amy Grant, *St Francis Xavier, Hamilton*

Ben Everill, *FigTree High School*

Elizabeth Cowling, *Illawarra Grammar School*

Lindsay Pickalla, *Illawarra Senior College*

Ross Glover, *Holy Spirit College, Bellambi*

Tristan Kane, *Kinross Wolaroi School, Orange*

Laura Read, *Wagga Wagga Technology High School*

Will Collie, *Trinity Senior High School, Wagga Wagga* 

# Greater flexibility for HSC students

Students entering Year 11 in 2000 will have greater flexibility for choosing subjects in the Higher School Certificate under new arrangements announced by the Board of Studies.

For the new Higher School Certificate, students will have more opportunity to choose subjects that interest them and to undertake a broad range of studies.

They will no longer have to choose subjects that might not meet their long-term career goals. English will still be the only compulsory subject for all students.

Under previous rules students had to choose 11 units in each of Years 11 and 12 to be eligible for the Higher School Certificate. At least one unit had to be from Key Learning Area Group 1 (Science/Mathematics/Technological and Applied Studies) and one unit from Key Learning Area Group 2 (Languages Other Than English/Human Society and Its Environment/Personal Development, Health and Physical Education/Creative Arts).

For Years 11 and 12, Key Learning Areas have now been abolished and the requirement for students to study courses from both groups no longer applies.


The number of units students have to study in the HSC year has been reduced to 10, but the adoption of a 2 unit structure for most courses means that generally students will study more subjects than at present.

The changes are in line with recommendations from the Government's White Paper.

The eligibility requirements for the HSC are as follows:

- students must study 12 units of Preliminary year courses
- HSC students must study 10 units of HSC courses
- in each year students must study:
  - at least six units from Board Developed Courses;
  - at least two units of a Board Developed Course in English;
  - at least three courses of two unit value or greater;
  - at least four subjects.

In satisfying the minimum requirements, a student may study no more than six units of courses in Science.

Universities support the changes and 10 units of Board Developed Courses will be used in the calculation of the Universities Admission Index. 

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## Transitional arrangements for the new Higher School Certificate


Board policy provides for students to accelerate or accumulate courses for the Higher School Certificate. These provisions will be maintained with the introduction of the new Higher School Certificate requirements. Provisions for students to accumulate and accelerate their studies, to repeat individual courses and to gain recognition for prior studies will continue under the new Higher School Certificate arrangements. Accordingly, interim arrangements will apply to cater for students who intend to complete their Higher School Certificate under these provisions.

### Principles

The principles governing the development of interim arrangements include the following:

- 1 As far as possible students will have the same opportunities to complete an acceleration or accumulation program when the new Higher School Certificate is introduced.
- 2 Students intending to undertake or who have already commenced such a program will be advised of the implications for their studies.
- 3 New courses will commence from Year 11, 2000 and current courses will not be offered thereafter.

However, there will be provision for students who wish to repeat to undertake a similar course within the same subject area.

- 4 Students will be able to complete General Studies and Applied Studies as Preliminary and/or HSC courses in 1999 and as HSC courses in 2000, but the courses will be deleted from Year 11, 2000. It will not be possible to repeat the HSC course in 2001.
- 5 Preliminary courses completed up to 1999 may count towards completion of the HSC courses for the purposes of completing the new study requirements in and after 2000.
- 6 The new HSC will require 12 Preliminary units and 10 HSC units. However, students who have completed 11 Preliminary units by the end of 1999 will be deemed to have completed Preliminary requirements for the new Higher School Certificate. They will need to complete at least 10 HSC units from and including the 2001 HSC in order to satisfy requirements for the award of the new Higher School Certificate.
- 7 Credit granted under the Board's Recognition of Prior Learning policy will count towards the new Higher School Certificate. 

## DesignTech draws crowds in Newcastle


A super seed-spreader, a contemporary café chair and a portable horse feeder were just three of the innovative projects that amazed the local Newcastle community who attended the DesignTech 98 exhibition in Charlestown Square.

Professor Gordon Stanley, President of the Board of Studies NSW, said this year's DesignTech exhibition, which featured designs from seven local talented students along with 20 works from all over NSW, had been well received by the Newcastle community.

'Ben Neville from Bulahdelah Central School designed an eye-catching, contemporary café chair, and a super seed-spreader designed by Jamie Campbell from Gloucester High School can be attached to the back of

a four-wheeled motor bike, which makes it appropriate for use on hobby farms,' Professor Stanley said.

A family heirloom in the shape of a christening gown was produced by Aleisha Wade, also from Gloucester High School, and Matthew Williams from Hunter Valley Grammar School designed a unique leaf-shape coffee table.

Patrick Staples from Morriset High School designed a power-driven and gas-fired spit roast and barbecue with a body made from a recycled 44 gallon drum. Selena de Carvalho, Newcastle High School, made a collection of finely crafted hats, masks, wings and wands. Julian Foong, Newcastle TAFE, designed a vibrant garment collection based on oriental themes. 



*Projects by DesignTech students on display in Charlestown Square*



## Students to benefit from standards-referenced assessment in the new HSC

Students sitting for the new Higher School Certificate will benefit from a standards-referenced approach to assessment and reporting in which their achievements are assessed and reported against specified standards of performance that are established for each course.

The standards-referenced approach will help students to have a clear idea of how well they are going in a course, what their strengths and weaknesses are and what they need to do to improve their standard of performance.

The marks students gain in a subject will be aligned with descriptions of what they know, understand and can do. The marks will reflect the standards actually achieved rather than just indicating a position in a predetermined distribution as they currently do. Students who meet the minimum standard will get a mark of at least 50.

The syllabus documents and assessment and reporting information for the new Stage 6 courses provide a clear picture of the kind of achievement expected from studying a course. This comes from the course outcomes and content, the levels of achievement described in the draft performance

bands, sample examination papers, tasks and marking guidelines.

The new Stage 6 courses are designed to cater for a range of student abilities: the draft performance bands describe five levels of achievement of the course outcomes above a minimum standard for all of the 2 unit courses.

As teachers become more adept at using a standards-referenced approach, their assessment tasks will focus on specific outcomes and their marking schemes for tasks will take into account the performance standards for the course. The descriptions of levels of achievement in the performance bands will help teachers provide feedback to students on their progress. Teachers will be able to give students clear targets to aim for to improve their performance.

Used appropriately, these performance descriptions will be a useful guide for teachers and students to assess progress towards achieving the expected standards. Students will benefit from specific feedback based on outcomes and the standards of performance described in the performance scale. 