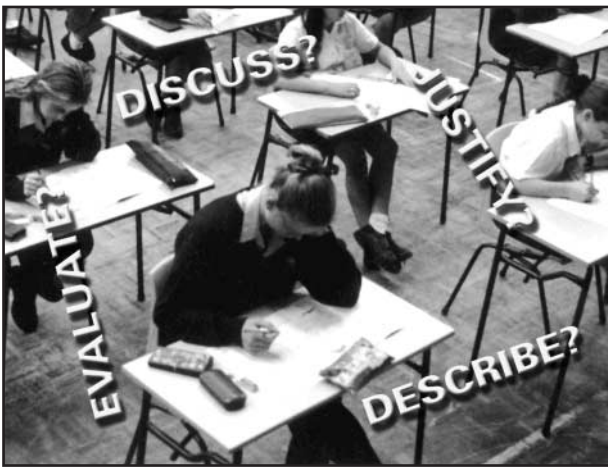


Glossary of key words

A major goal for the New Higher School Certificate was that students should understand more clearly what they are expected to do to reach high standards.

As part of this, in 1999 the Board developed a Glossary of Key Words commonly used in past HSC exam questions in different subjects.



These key words also appear frequently in outcomes statements and performance descriptions across HSC courses.

Purpose

The purpose behind the glossary was to help students to prepare better for the HSC by showing them that certain key words were used similarly in exam questions across the different subjects they were studying.

In classrooms, teachers of different subjects could use the glossary to help students better understand what the examination questions in their subject required.

Students would recognise the consistent approach from teachers of these different subjects and they would have more consistent cues as to how to approach exam questions.

For example, students would be better placed to respond to 'explain' questions if, in the context of different subjects, they developed an understanding that 'explain' could require them to *relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how.*

Key words are best discussed with students in the context of questions and tasks they are working on, rather than in isolation.

Some important considerations in using the glossary

A number of matters to do with the glossary were raised in submissions to the Masters review. Among these were views that:

- the use of the glossary by teachers had resulted in too much teaching time and emphasis on decoding and applying the terms
- examination questions within and across subjects now appeared to be more formulaic
- use of the glossary could lead to discarding the distinctive vocabulary of subjects.

There is little doubt that a glossary of this kind can assist students to better understand what is expected of them in essays and examinations. It would be an unwelcome effect though, if use of the terms were to result in rigid, overly constraining questions.

It would also be a negative if they were applied too rigidly to the marking of students' answers.

To guard against this, the Board's exam setting process now includes an additional check to ensure that key words are used appropriately in exam question construction. The same checking process is applied to the development of marking guidelines to ensure flexibility in the marking process.

It is also important that the key words should not be interpreted in an overly prescriptive way. Examiners

must ensure that they do not use them in ways that conflict with their particular meaning within subjects. To do this would be counter productive.

A term like 'evaluate', for example, requires a different

kind of response in mathematics from that required in history and this needs to be respected.

When using key words to construct questions, tasks and marking schemes, it is helpful to ask what the use of the term in a particular question requires students to do.

Key words are best discussed with students in the context of questions and tasks they are working on, rather than in isolation.

A GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Account, Account for: | state reasons for, report on. Give an account of; narrate a series of events or transactions |
| Analyse | Identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications |
| Apply | Use, utilise, employ in a particular situation |
| Appreciate | Make a judgement about the value of |
| Assess | Make a judgment of value, quality, outcomes, results or size |
| Calculate | Ascertain/determine from given facts, figures or information |
| Clarify | Make clear or plain |
| Classify | Arrange or include in classes/categories |
| Compare | Show how things are similar or different |
| Construct | Make; build; put together items or arguments |
| Contrast | Show how things are different or opposite |
| Critically (analyse/evaluate) | Add a degree or level of accuracy, depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to (analysis/evaluation) |
| Deduce | Draw conclusions |
| Define | State meaning and identify essential qualities |
| Demonstrate | Show by example |
| Describe | Provide characteristics and features |
| Discuss | Identify issues and provide points for and/or against |
| Distinguish | Recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from; to note differences between |
| Evaluate | Make a judgement based on criteria; determine the value of |
| Examine | Inquire into |
| Explain | Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how |
| Extract | Choose relevant and/or appropriate details |
| Extrapolate | Infer from what is known |
| Identify | Recognise and name |
| Interpret | Draw meaning from |
| Investigate | Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about |
| Justify | Support an argument or conclusion |
| Outline | Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of |
| Predict | Suggest what may happen based on available information |
| Propose | Put forward (for example a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action |
| Recall | Present remembered ideas, facts or experiences |
| Recommend | Provide reasons in favour |
| Recount | Retell a series of events |
| Summarise | Express, concisely, the relevant details |
| Synthesise | Putting together various elements to make a whole |

It is important to note that exam questions for the HSC will also continue to use self-explanatory terms such as 'how', or 'why' or 'to what extent'. While key words have a purpose, they will not set limits on legitimate subject-based questions in exam papers.

Key words and levels of response

Along with the mark value and space provided in exam booklets, the key words can help a student to judge how much an answer needs to cover.

The table below provides a general guide to the kind of response required by each of the key words. The table is not intended to be prescriptive, and you will notice that some key words appear in more than one row.

| Groupings of syllabus knowledge, skills and understanding | Groupings of key words |
|---|--|
| Skills in analysis and critical thinking | Analyse, distinguish, examine, explain, extract, investigate |
| Skills in application and performance | Demonstrate, discuss, apply, calculate, construct |
| Knowledge, recall and understanding | Define, describe, explain, give an account, identify, outline, recall, recount |
| Skills in evaluation | Appreciate, assess, discuss, evaluate, justify, predict, account for |
| Skills in problem-solving | Apply, calculate, clarify, compare, contrast, construct, deduce, demonstrate, investigate, predict, propose, recommend |
| Skills in synthesis and creative thinking | Classify, extrapolate, interpret, summarise, synthesise |

The left-hand column in the table is a grouping of the knowledge, skills and understanding typically found in Stage 6 syllabuses.

The key words from the glossary are grouped in the right hand column alongside the groupings of knowledge, skills and understanding.

The terms in the right-hand column such as 'describe', 'identify' and 'outline' are typically used in questions requiring recall of knowledge. Questions using these terms generally require less depth and are worth fewer marks than questions using terms such as 'assess', 'evaluate' and 'justify' which call for higher-order thinking. The latter generally require an answer of greater depth and usually attract higher marks.

Other terms such as 'explain' and 'discuss' can vary considerably in the mark value and depth of response required.

Adjusting for variation in difficulty level of optional HSC exam questions

The inclusion of optional topics in HSC syllabuses allows students to focus on areas of greatest interest to them and provides topic choice for both students and teachers.

During the 2001 HSC, concerns were expressed that students would be disadvantaged by the level of difficulty of some option questions in examinations compared with others.

The Board has procedures in place to ensure that students are not disadvantaged for having chosen a particular option.

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In setting exam papers all examination committees strive to make sure that optional questions are of similar intellectual demand.

They design related optional questions to assess a similar mix of skills at a comparable level of rigour. The demands of each optional question are then set down in the marking guidelines for that question.

During the pilot-marking phase minor adjustments can be made to the marking guidelines, making it more likely

that comparable marks will be allocated to students of similar ability across different optional questions.

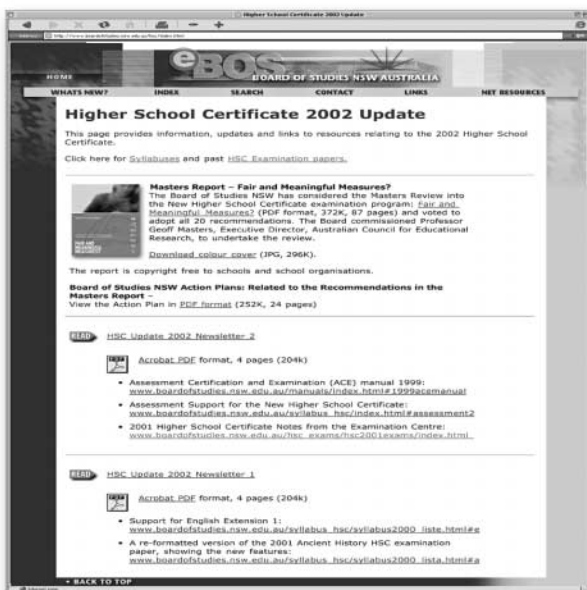
Despite these checks and adjustments, it is sometimes the case that an optional question turns out to be easier or more difficult for students than the others. In this situation a statistical adjustment is made so that the final distribution of marks for the question compares fairly with the mark distribution for the others.

As noted in the Masters report, the issue is not so much whether optional questions are equally difficult but whether students choosing different options are treated fairly in the marking if it is found that those options are not of the same difficulty.

The Board has a routine 'marks monitoring and adjustment' process that looks for any differences in the difficulties of optional questions and identifies cases requiring necessary statistical adjustment to marks. The process takes into account the performance of each group on the common sections of the paper. Where appropriate, statistical adjustments are then made to the spread of marks for each question.

This procedure is standard practice.

HSC 2002 Update on the website



The Board of Studies website now has an HSC 2002 Update page. (www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc)

It provides information, updates and links to resources relating to the 2002 Higher School Certificate.

School assessment marks for the HSC

Some schools have asked recently whether their assessment procedures and practices for each course should be modified so that the majority of students receive assessment marks between 50 and 100.

The Board has advised in a recent letter to principals that although the majority of students' reported HSC marks will lie between 50–100 because the minimum standard is set at 50, schools should continue to assess and provide final assessments using the full range of marks.

For most cohorts, use of the mark range from 0–100 is recommended.

The Board's procedural requirements for school assessment set out in the *Assessment, Certification and Examinations (ACE) Manual* Section 11 have not changed. (www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc)

For each assessment task, marks are recorded for individual students, and then aggregated using appropriate weightings to arrive at a final assessment mark for each student in each course.

The final assessment mark may be determined by the simple aggregation of the assessment task marks or by statistical standardising procedures. Marks submitted must show relative differences between students' performances.

The Board's publication, *The New Higher School Certificate Assessment Support Document* (1999), (www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc) sets out various developments in assessment and marking practice that could be expected to take place in school assessment in 2002. These are outlined below.

Suggested features of school assessment programs

- Assessment tasks are focused on outcomes.
- The type of assessment task clearly reflects the outcomes being assessed.
- Students know and understand the outcomes to be assessed and the levels of performance reflected in the marking schemes.
- Marking schemes for tasks are linked to the standards by including the wording of outcomes and relevant performance descriptions.
- Feedback to students is provided using the outcomes and relevant performance descriptions.
- Ranking and relative differences come from different levels of achievement of the specified standards.

In conducting school assessment programs, teachers' understanding of the standards is now further informed by samples of student responses (in standards packages) and 2001 HSC Notes from the Examination Centre (www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc).

Moderation of school assessment marks using the performance of the school course group in the examinations will remain in place. This will ensure that school assessment marks and examination marks are aligned to the same standard.

For further information contact the Board's Assessment Branch on (02) 9367 8300.

Board endorses new role of Chief Examiner for 2003

The recent review of the HSC examination program recommended that the Board of Studies explore the feasibility of appointing a Chief Examiner for each course with responsibility for overseeing both the development and the marking of the HSC examination.

The Board accepted the recommendation and at its May meeting approved the role and responsibilities of the new position.

The Chief Examiner will:

- assume the roles and responsibilities of chair of the examination committee, with responsibility for the development of quality HSC examination papers and marking guidelines
- have a governance role during marking and be responsible for ensuring that the policies and procedures applying to the handover phase and subsequent phases of marking are carried out on behalf of the Board
- oversee the marking process to ensure that the marking guidelines, marking schemes and benchmark scripts allow for marking that discriminates adequately, rewards quality answers appropriately and accommodates unanticipated approaches to questions
- exercise a leadership role in the alignment of marks to standards through the judging process and in advising the Board's Consultative Committee on the examination paper and the marking guidelines.

The role of Chief Examiner will commence with the development of the 2003 HSC examinations.

In the interim, the Board of Studies has integrated key aspects of the chief examiner's role in its processes for the 2002 HSC examinations.

HSC advanced study and VET on the increase

Year 12 entry figures at May 2002 showed:

- 1846 entries in the English Extension 2 course - up by 23%
- 4534 entries in the English Extension 1 course - up by 15%
- 21 244 entries in the English Advanced course - up by 4%
- 3080 entries in the Mathematics Extension 2 course - up by 14%
- 2060 entries in the History Extension course - up by 18%
- 21 830 entries in HSC Vocational Education and Training courses - up by 23%
- 4921 entries in the Information Technology VET courses - up by 38%
- 2108 entries in the Retail Operations VET courses - up by 32%