



PRINCIPLES FOR EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT IN HSC SYLLABUSES

A set of guiding principles has been developed to assist Stage 6 syllabus writers in developing appropriate internal assessment guidelines and external examination specifications. These principles provide a framework for specifying how the assessment of student achievement should be undertaken for the HSC courses in the Board's Stage 6 syllabuses. The framework is to be used by writers and others who develop requirements for examinations and guidelines for internal assessment as part of the Board's syllabus development process.

The principles also provide a means for determining the appropriateness of the approaches to examining and assessment proposed in the draft syllabus documents.

The principles fall into five broad groups:

- (i) overarching assessment principles
- (ii) principles for structure of examinations
- (iii) principles for written examinations
- (iv) principles for practical examinations/submitted works
- (v) principles for internal assessment.

They have been grouped in this way in order to assist syllabus writers in seeing the assessment requirements for the course holistically, so that the internal assessment guidelines and the examination specifications, separately and together, will allow for valid and effective measurement of student achievement in the whole of the HSC course.

Principles for developing examination specifications and internal assessment guidelines in Board Developed HSC courses

<i>No.</i>	<i>Principle</i>	<i>In practice this means</i>
I. Overarching assessment principles		
1.	The form of the examination and internal assessment specified in the syllabus will allow for efficient and effective assessment of student achievement in relation to the course outcomes and content.	The internal assessment specifications should allow schools to devise appropriate assessment programs consisting of three to five tasks in each HSC course. Examinations must allow reliable educational judgements to be made about student achievement in efficient and cost-effective ways.
2.	The weightings given to the content and skills in the external examination and the internal assessment should reflect the emphases given or implied in the syllabus.	The assessment requirements for the course as a whole should reflect the content and outcomes of the course, and the proportions of course time devoted to the various parts of the course. As far as possible, this should also be reflected in the internal assessment and the external examination separately.
3.	The types of tasks specified in the examination specifications and for the internal assessment are to be appropriate to the outcomes to be assessed, and as a whole should allow discrimination of performance across all levels on the performance scale.	A variety of tasks, including written, oral practical and performance, can be used to assess student achievement, both in internal assessment and the external examination.
II. Principles for structure of examinations		
4.	Examinations will include practical or submitted tasks only where there are substantial course objectives or outcomes that cannot be validly measured by a written examination, and where it is inappropriate to assess these solely by internal school assessment.	Where there are substantial course outcomes that are best assessed by practical or performance tasks, consideration should be given first to including these tasks in the internal assessment requirements. In recommending practical or submitted tasks as part of the examination, it must be demonstrated that such tasks can be cost-effectively delivered and marked. Consideration needs also to be given to the time students require to produce the work or task in relation to the total examination and preparation time.

No.	Principle	In practice this means
5.	The examination specifications will prescribe the various components of the external examination, and the mark values for each.	Specifications are to be as specific as possible, consistent with the syllabus and the nature of the subject.
6.	The examination specifications will specify weightings for the various parts of the course consistent with the emphases given or implied in the syllabus.	Where the course structure specifies the proportion of course time to be given to content areas, this will be reflected in the structure of the examination.
7.	The time allowed for the examination will be the minimum required for reliable measurement of achievement on the outcomes to be assessed.	Written papers worth 100 marks should be between two and three hours duration. Performances or oral examinations need to be long enough to allow students to demonstrate complex or skilled responses, but should not overtax students' ability to sustain the performance.
8.	The length of any part of an examination will be commensurate with the marks allocated to that part.	The inclusion of a practical component in the examination should lead to a reduction in the mark value and length of the written paper.
9.	Where a course has optional sections or topics, this will be reflected in the structure of the examination.	The marks allocated to options in the examination will be proportional to the percentage of course time taken in studying the option. The specifications should allow the questions or items for the different options to be of similar demand.
10.	If the examination contains questions or other items on course options, the examination must contain a significant portion of common material to allow the comparability of the options to be established.	Common material must total no less than 25% of the marks. Non-written parts of the examination are to be included. Examinations should not contain optional questions in common material.
III. Principles for written examinations		
11.	The scope of the written examination will cover all content and outcomes that can be validly assessed by a written examination.	In any given examination a representative range of content and outcomes will be sampled. However, the examination specifications will allow that over time, all relevant content and outcomes can be addressed.

No.	Principle	In practice this means
12.	Written examinations will include a range of item types, consistent with the outcomes and content of the course, and with good assessment practice.	Item types commonly include multiple-choice, short-response and extended response items.
13.	Examinations will allow students a choice of questions on a topic or area of content when the nature of the subject is such that a single question on the topic may be restrictive for students.	Choice of questions on a topic typically occurs in subjects where a topic may cover a broad range of content, such as history or languages, and where different emphases in the way the course is taught may mean that students find single questions on the topic are difficult to respond to.
14.	The examination specifications will prescribe the sections and parts of the written examination, the item types within each, and the mark value for each section or part.	Examination papers are structured in 'sections' and 'parts' to reflect the course structure and to assist students in working through the paper. Questions may be grouped on the basis of item type or content, as appropriate.
IV. Principles for practical examinations/submitted works		
15.	The examination specifications will clearly set out the requirements of the task, and will specify the marks allocated to any parts or aspects of the task that are assessed separately.	<p>It will be clear to students what they are being asked to produce, what is required in order to gain high marks in the task, what the components being assessed are, and the mark values for each.</p> <p>In developing these requirements, consideration will be given to ensuring that the task allows discrimination across the range of student achievement. The expected time that students would need to devote to the task will also be taken into account.</p>
V. Principles for internal assessment		
16.	The scope for the internal assessment will cover all the course outcomes (apart from values and attitudes), including those measured by the external examination.	Values and attitudes must not count towards the final assessment mark, though schools may choose to assess and report these in other ways. The components and weightings specified for the course should allow for the assessment of all other course outcomes.
17.	The components for assessment will be skills or content areas specified in the syllabus, and the weightings will be consistent with the emphases given in the syllabus.	For some courses it may be appropriate to use content areas as the components, while for others skill areas may be used.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Principle</i>	<i>In practice this means</i>
18.	Where types of assessment tasks are specified, they will be appropriate to the outcomes being assessed.	Types of tasks will only be specified where the nature of the course outcomes makes this appropriate. However, in developing assessment programs, schools are encouraged to use a range of types of assessment task to allow students to demonstrate their achievement.
19.	Internal assessment will recommend or include practical or extended-project-type tasks only where there are substantial course objectives or outcomes that can only validly be assessed this way.	In recommending practical or performance tasks in internal assessment, the existence of such tasks in other curriculum areas must be taken into account and the impact on school organisation and time available to students must be considered.
20.	Where the external examination has practical or submitted tasks, any internal assessment relating to these tasks will be on aspects that are not assessed externally.	The same aspects of the performance or task should not count twice towards the overall assessment of the student's achievement.