



Report on the Data Collection for
School Certificate Credentialling
for Students with Special Education Needs
in Stage 5 (1996)

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1 Issue

Report on the data collection for *School Certificate Credentialling for Students with Special Needs in Stage 5* (1996).

2 Background

Since 1993 students with special education needs completing an approved program of study have been eligible to receive the School Certificate. An interim mechanism was established (1993 – 1995) to ensure that the student's program of study reflected the key learning area requirements for the award of School Certificate. *School Certificate Credentialling for Students with Special Needs in Stage 5*, released in 1996, provided Stage 5 Life Skills courses in each key learning area. The intention of the special program of study provision was to provide teachers with the opportunity to design integrated teaching/learning programs for students with special education needs which enabled them to meet the curriculum requirements for the award of a School Certificate.

In providing Life Skills courses, the Board recognised that for some students, the majority of whom would be students with an intellectual disability, regular Board Developed courses might not provide sufficient scope for the development of an appropriate program of study. The availability of Stage 5 Life Skills courses allows schools to develop a flexible program of study for individual students with special education needs. Any such program of study will include the Board Developed courses (including Life Skills courses) and Board Endorsed courses that are most appropriate for the achievement of the long and short-term goals identified through the transition-planning process.

At its 27 June 2000 meeting the Board decided that *School Certificate Credentialling for Students with Special Education Needs in Stage 5* should be subject to routine data collection in accordance with the procedures established in the revised syllabus development process. As a consequence of this decision a data collection project was undertaken in order to:

- acquire qualitative and quantitative data on the use of the special program of study
- ascertain whether the intentions of the special program of study are being achieved
- ascertain whether the document provides sufficient guidance to allow the preparation of appropriate programs for students with special education needs

- ascertain the level of continuity between the Stage 5 Special Program of Study and the Stage 6 Special Program of Study.

3 DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Strategies

Data collection involved a number of activities over the period November 2000 – May 2001.

3.1.1 Board course completion data 1993 – 2000 (November 2000)

A review of data on completion of Stage 5 Life Skills courses 1993 – 2000 was considered by gender and sector in each of the following categories:

- number of courses completed
- individual course completion
- ATSI number of courses completed
- ATSI individual course completion
- LOTE spoken at home number of courses completed
- LOTE spoken at home individual course completion.

3.1.2 Survey of a sample of schools (February 2001 – March 30, 2001)

A random sample of 100 schools was selected from the 397 schools that had entered Year 10 students for the Stage 5 Life Skills courses in 2000. The profile of the sample follows:

- Government schools (71) - Special schools (21)
 - Schools with support classes (30)
 - Schools with no support classes (20)
- Non-government schools (29) - Catholic school (19)
 - Independent school (10)
- Of the sample schools, 55 were from the Sydney metropolitan area and 45 were country schools.

The survey sought responses in regard to:

- planning and implementation processes
- identification of students undertaking Stage 5 Life Skills courses
- information regarding rules and requirements provided to schools
- the focus statements, outcomes and indicators provided in the KLA Frameworks
- reporting provisions for Stage 5 Life Skills courses

- strengths and weaknesses of the document including the current format
- the extent of continuity between the Stage 5 and Stage 6 Life Skills courses.

A total of 42 schools responded. A profile of respondent schools follows:

- 27 Government schools (64.3%), 9 Catholic schools (21.4%), 6 Independent schools (14.3%)
- 19 High Schools (45.2%), 11 High Schools with support classes (26.2%), 12 Special Schools (28.6%)
- 23 Metropolitan (54.8%), 15 Non-metropolitan town/city (35.7%), 4 Rural (9.5%)
- 22 Individual responses (52.4%), 20 Group responses (47.6%).

3.1.3 Forums (2–17 May 2001)

Three forums were conducted (DET District Office – Parramatta; Carinya Christian School – Tamworth; and St Peter’s Catholic College – Tuggerah). Participation was by invitation, based on a list of schools and support personnel provided by Systems representatives on the Board’s Special Education Committee. The forums were conducted by officers from the Office of the Board of Studies with the support of representatives from the Association of Independent Schools, the Catholic Education Commission and the Department of Education and Training. A common set of questions, based on the areas covered in the survey, was used for each forum.

Eighty-two participants attended the forums:

- Parramatta (44): Government 30, Catholic 9, Independent 5.
- Tamworth (13): Government 7, Catholic 3, Independent 3.
- Tuggerah (25): Government 17, Catholic 8.
- Total participation: Government 54 (66 %), Catholic 20 (24 %), Independent 8 (10 %)
- The participants included teaching staff, executive teachers, Diocesan and District personnel, and representatives from the Catholic Education Commission, the Association of Independent Schools and the Department of Education and Training.

3.1.4 Additional written submissions

Additional written submissions were received from:

Barbara Hinchey	Department of Education and Training, Lake Macquarie / Newcastle
Deborah Dibley	Muswellbrook High School
Barbara Browne	James Fallon High School
Ann McGaw	Mater Dei

3.2 Summary of quantitative data

- Students completing Stage 5 Life Skills courses 1993 – 2000

Year	Students	Female/Male %	Gov/Non-Gov %	% Increase	% of Candidature
1993	587	40 / 60	94 / 6	-	0.8
1994	873	41 / 59	95 / 5	33	1.2
1995	870	40 / 60	90 / 10	- 1	1.2
1996	1039	40 / 60	84 / 16	16	1.3
1997	1273	41 / 59	84 / 16	18	1.6
1998	1292	38 / 62	85 / 15	1	1.6
1999	1507	39 / 61	86 / 14	14	1.9
2000	1653	41 / 59	86 / 14	9	2.0

- The female / male ratio has remained stable at approximately 40/60 since 1993.
- The Government / Non-government ratio has remained stable at approximately 85/15 since 1996.
- The average yearly increase in enrolments since 1994 is 13%.
- There has been a gradual rise in the proportion of the total School Certificate candidature of students who complete one or more Life Skills courses (the total candidature for English has been used as a guide to total candidature).

- Number of courses completed 1999 and 2000 as percentage of total Life Skills enrolment

Courses	Students 1999	% of total Life Skills candidature	Students 2000	% of total Life Skills candidature
1	74	5	94	5.5
2	89	6	75	4.5
3	76	5	108	6.5
4	100	6.5	98	6
5	75	5	105	6.5
6	114	7.5	104	6.5
7	330	22	184	11
8	649	43	885	53.5
	1507		1653	

- The significant majority (approx. 64%) of students undertaking a special program of study in Stage 5 are enrolled in a full Life Skills program (7 or 8 Life Skills courses).

- Numbers of ATSI students completing Stage 5 Life Skills courses 1993 – 2000 as percentage of total Life Skills enrolment

Year	No. of Life Skills students	ATSI students	% of total Life Skills candidature
1993	587	16	2.7
1994	873	18	2.0
1995	870	32	3.7
1996	1039	56	5.4
1997	1273	66	5.2
1998	1292	76	5.9
1999	1507	74	4.9
2000	1653	96	5.8

- The percentage of the whole Stage 5 Life Skills candidature who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has remained stable in the range 4.9% – 5.9% since 1996.

- Numbers of LOTE spoken at home students completing Stage 5 Life Skills courses 1996 – 2000 as percentage of total Life Skills enrolment

Year	No. of Life Skills students	LOTE students	% of total Life Skills candidature
1996	1039	167	16.0
1997	1273	195	15.3
1998	1292	203	15.7
1999	1507	246	16.3
2000	1653	232	14.0

- The percentage of the whole Stage 5 Life Skills candidature who speak a language other than English at home has remained stable in the range 14.0% – 16.3% since 1996.

3.3 Summary of qualitative data

The School Certificate

- The School Certificate is highly valued as a valid, credible credential for students with special education needs. It has provided an accountability framework and a common assessment rubric across a broad KLA base for students with special education needs in a range of educational settings.

Current credentialling provision

- The flexibility of the current provision has universal approval. Its capacity to allow students to qualify for the award of a School Certificate through a pattern of study, which may include Life Skills courses, Board Developed courses and Board Endorsed courses, is viewed as a strength.

Planning and programming

- Respondents indicated that the document is currently being used in various ways and degrees to plan and implement programs.
- Respondents report that a range of school-based planning processes is used to identify students for participation in Life Skills courses in Stage 5. There was some concern that the courses could be used as a 'dumping ground' for students with learning difficulties, and that both the rationale and eligibility requirements for the Life Skills courses should be made more explicit, as they are in Stage 6.

Board of Studies advice

- Concern was expressed that the Information for Schools section of the document and the *ACE Manual* (1999) provide differing advice on the rules and requirements for Stage 5 credentialling. The need was indicated for consistency of advice and terminology within and across all Board documents.

Online data entry

- The need for more effective procedures for online entry of data by schools was expressed, particularly in relation to outcomes collection for the student profile.

LOTE requirement

- There was general support for a review of the mandatory LOTE requirement. The appropriateness of a requirement for study in LOTE, particularly for students with high support needs, was questioned.

Review of School Certificate Credentialling for Students with Special Needs in Stage 5.

- There was strong support for a review of *School Certificate Credentialling for Students with Special Needs in Stage 5*.
- There was considerable support that this review include the development of Stage 4/5 Life Skills Syllabuses in each KLA.
- There was general support for the concept of a continuum of learning across Stages 4, 5 and 6 for students with special education needs.
- It was indicated that a review should take account of the outcomes and structures of syllabuses in both single course KLAs and multi-syllabus KLAs.
- There was strong support for the view that new documentation should be more detailed and comprehensive, consistent with the Stage 6 Life Skills syllabuses.
- The need for the Board to provide appropriate curriculum for all students with special education needs across Years 7–10 was indicated.

4 Conclusion

The current enrolment in Stage 5 Life Skills courses represents approximately 2.0% of the total School Certificate candidature, with the majority of these students (64%) enrolled in a full Life Skills program (7 or 8 Life Skills courses).

The School Certificate is highly valued, as a valid, credible credential for students with special education needs and the flexibility of the current School Certificate credentialling provision for students with special education needs has universal approval.

There is, however, strong support for a review of the current syllabus provision for students with special education needs in Years 7-10. This support focuses on the need for consistent, unambiguous information for schools, increased scope in the outcomes and more detailed content. The perceived quality of the Stage 6 Life Skills syllabuses was a significant factor in the data collection. These courses are seen as providing clearer guidelines for schools as well as detailed outcomes and content. The Stage 6 model is seen to be a desirable one in the redevelopment of Years 7–10 Life Skills syllabuses in each of the secondary key learning areas.

While there is strong support for the Board's commitment to the development of syllabuses that are inclusive of all students in NSW, there is also a recognition that for particular students with special education needs the Life Skills courses will continue to be an important factor in the development of an appropriate program of study in Years 7–10.

The review of 7–10 Life Skills courses should be undertaken within the context of the development of the K–10 Curriculum Framework and proceed in conjunction with the review of all 7–10 syllabuses.