



23 February 2009

## Quality the key in 2010 HSC

Quality rather than quantity is the key message for changes announced today to the 2010 NSW Higher School Certificate.

Minister for Education and Training, Ms Verity Firth said HSC students will now be provided with the approximate length expected for their exam essays.

“The aim is to encourage students to answer the question in a relevant, organised way, rather than simply write everything they know on a topic,” said Ms Firth.

“The new recommended lengths will vary depending on the course and the question.

“For example, in the HSC Business Studies exam, there are two 20-mark essays. For the 2010 exam, students will be advised that the expected length of each essay is around six writing booklet pages, or approximately 800 words.

“In the past, HSC markers have reported that students were writing 20 pages or more per essay – apart from sometimes producing irrelevant answers, this can leave students short of time to complete the whole paper adequately.

“However, the suggested length will be advice only and students will not be penalised for answers longer or shorter – all essays will still be marked on their merits.

Ms Firth said guidelines are being developed to help students avoid spending unnecessary amounts of time and money on their HSC major works, often to the detriment of their other HSC courses.

“For example, there are cases of Design and Technology students providing 20,000 to 40,000 word portfolios for marking in addition to the major design project,” she said.

“Of course we won’t stop passionate young artists and designers from focusing on the work they enjoy the most – the aim here is to let them know they can get high marks without spending a fortune or neglecting their other studies.

Ms Firth said multiple choice questions were being introduced in four subjects - Ancient and Modern History (value between 5 to 10 marks), Industrial Technology (10 marks) and Society and Culture (value 8 marks).

The value of multiple choice questions will also be increased in eight subjects including Geography, Physics, Chemistry and Biology (up from 15 marks to 20 marks), and Food Technology (up from 10 marks to 20 marks).

“Multiple choice questions provide consistency across similar natured exams and gives greater ability to test a student’s knowledge,” said Ms Firth.

The other change to the 2010 HSC is increase of the value of the externally marked Society and Culture Personal Interest Project from 30 per cent to 40 per cent, consistent with marks for other subjects’ major works.

There are no changes to exam lengths, allotted reading times or recommended number of school assessment tasks.

Ms Firth said the changes were the result of consultation last year by the Board of Studies. More than 900 submissions were received from individuals and groups representing students, teachers and parents.

“The changes can be seen as further improvement to an extremely successful Higher School Certificate, rightly recognised as a leading international secondary school credential.

“None of the changes apply to the 2009 Year 11 or Year 12 students.

“Further consultation will be undertaken on English, the only mandatory course in the HSC.

“As a result, there will be no changes to 2-unit English until 2011 HSC at the earliest.

Sample multiple choice questions, school assessment programs and other support materials will be developed and progressively added to the Board of Studies’ website this year.

The Board will work closely with professional teacher associations to generate these materials for teachers and students.

**Media contact: Lisa Bateman 0437 140 029**