

Fairness and integrity core to NSW HSC

The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) today released the 2013 data for three programs that support the fairness and integrity of the NSW Higher School Certificate:

- Disability provisions
- Illness and misadventure appeals
- Maintaining integrity in assessments and examinations.

President of BOSTES, Tom Alegounarias said the NSW HSC is highly regarded both within Australia and internationally and this reflects the quality of our syllabuses, teaching, and the fairness and integrity of the examinations and school assessments.

“BOSTES applies stringent processes when assessing disability provisions applications, illness/misadventure appeals and examination integrity rules,” Mr Alegounarias said.

“These ensure that every case is carefully considered so students have every chance to show what they can do in the examinations and school assessments.

“BOSTES encourages and supports all schools, parents and students to understand and consider whether a student requires disability provisions or illness/misadventure consideration.”

Disability provisions in the HSC give practical assistance to students who may otherwise be disadvantaged when undertaking their exams. Emergency provisions are also approved for late injuries such as a broken arm prior to the examinations.

Last year an Ombudsman’s review of 2012 HSC applications for disability provisions found that provisions were granted appropriately. The Ombudsman also made a series of recommendations about the conduct of the disability provisions program which were accepted and implemented by BOSTES.

If an illness/misadventure appeal is upheld, students will be awarded the higher of their examination mark and a mark derived from their assessment mark and unaffected components of their examination. Their Record of Achievement will indicate if this alternative is used.

Disability provisions do not confer additional marks, and are not intended to confer any advantage. They allow students to participate in the examination process in the same way as their peers.

Illness/misadventure appeals also do not confer any advantage. The student’s school assessment mark may be used for some or all of their exam mark, if examination performance is lower than expected.

Examination integrity includes breaches of examination rules and of malpractice by students undertaking HSC school assessment tasks. BOSTES and schools take incidents of malpractice seriously, and warn students that the consequences of malpractice can range from loss of some marks to their entire HSC.

From next year, BOSTES will also report on instances of malpractice in school-based HSC assessment tasks.

“The one unifying feature of these programs is that BOSTES considers each application on a case by case basis to ensure that all decisions are fair and transparent,” Mr Alegounarias said.

Summary of 2013 statistics:

Disability provisions:

- BOSTES received 6267 applications for disability provisions.
- 5857 were either fully or partially approved.
- Over 87% of all schools – and over 86% of government schools – had at least one application for disability provisions. This is a small increase from 2012.
- The numbers of each type of provision approved generally remained consistent.

Illness and misadventure appeals:

- Due to the Blue Mountains bushfires which affected 20 schools there was a substantial increase in appeals.
- As Illness and misadventure appeals are for unforeseen incidents, the numbers, types and schools vary from year to year.

Examination integrity:

- Incidents of cheating remain stable.
- This includes a very small number of students (19 from over 75,000) breaching examination rules and 102 students where the school was unable to certify that the student’s major project was all their own work or completed in the permitted time.
- There was an increase in the number of non-serious attempt cases. BOSTES will raise this with schools and explain the consequences of a non-serious attempt in an examination to students.

For more information visit:

<http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/disability-provisions/statistics.html>

http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc_exams/illness-misadventure.html

http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc_exams/exam-rule-breaches.html

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