

## Student matters

# Revised policies on special provisions and late and non-submission of student responses in senior secondary subjects

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### Purpose

To inform principals about the revision and renaming of the *Policy on Special Consideration for School-based Assessments in Senior Certification* and the revised policy statement on *Late submission and non-submission of student assessment in Authority and Authority-registered subjects*.

As of January 2009, these policies will be referred to as the *Policy on Special Provisions for School-based Assessments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects* and *Late Submission and Non-submission of Student Responses to Assessment Instruments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects*.

This advice updates and replaces, and is consistent with, the previous policy statements *Policy on Special Consideration for School-based Assessments in Senior Certification* (April 2006) and *Late submission and non-submission of student assessment in Authority subjects and Authority-registered subjects* (July 2004).

### Background

At its November 2008 meeting, the Authority governing body approved the content of the attached policy statements to schools on special provisions for school-based assessments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects and the late submission and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects.

The *Policy on Special Provisions for School-based Assessments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects* was revised to further strengthen consistency with the Commonwealth legislation on *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, which clarifies the obligations of schools and other providers in making reasonable adjustments to the conditions of assessment for students with disabilities in relation to their education and training needs. A name change to "Special Provisions" has been made to indicate an intent that reasonable educational adjustments should be made **before** a student undertakes an assessment.

Under the previous policy on *Late submission and non-submission of student assessment in Authority and Authority-registered subjects*, principals were required to formally notify the QSA if a result for a student was not going to be awarded for continuous non-submission of subject assessment. Under the revised Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Regulation 2002 this is no longer the case. Principals are no longer required to formally notify the QSA if they intend not to award an exit level of achievement to a student for an Authority or Authority-registered subject. Principals may still exercise their discretion in not awarding an exit level of achievement for student work not submitted. Under the legislation there is recourse for a student to appeal such a decision directly with the school.

As a consequence of the amended legislation, there was an opportunity to revise both policies, which are related to each other and should be read together.

## Attachments and web links

The *Policy on Special Provisions for School-based Assessments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects* and the policy statement on *Late Submission and Non-submission of Student Responses to Assessment Instruments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects* are attached and may be found on the QSA website <[www.qsa.qld.edu.au](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au)>.

## What you need to do

Principals are requested to bring these two policies to the attention of staff, students and parents in their schools. Both revised policies should be read in conjunction with each other.

Principals are also encouraged to bring to the attention of staff the *Strategies for a School-based Policy for Late and Non-submission of Student Responses to Assessment Instruments* on the QSA website at [Assessment > Senior Assessment > Forms and procedures](#). This document provides schools with strategies for developing a school-based policy for the late and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects.

The QSA will be conducting workshops on strategies for schools developing school-based policy on special provisions in Semester 1, 2009. Information regarding these workshops will be available early in Term 1, 2009 on the QSA website at [P-12 syllabuses and support > Professional development](#) and events.

## More information

If you would like more information, please email the Acting Manager, Quality Assurance Unit, at [qau@qsa.qld.edu.au](mailto:qau@qsa.qld.edu.au), or phone 3864 0231.

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# Policy on Special Provisions for School-based Assessments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects

January 2009

## Introduction

This policy defines the responsibilities, principles and guidelines to be applied for special provisions in school-based assessments for Authority and Authority-registered subjects. It updates and replaces, and is consistent with, the previous *Policy on Special Consideration for School-based Assessments in Senior Certification* (February 2006). It specifically relates to students working towards senior certification in Authority and Authority-registered subjects.

The responsibility for making decisions about special provisions lies directly with the schools. However, this policy should serve as an appropriate guide and reference for schools in making those decisions.

“Special provisions” means making reasonable adjustments to conditions of assessment to ensure equitable opportunities for all students.<sup>1</sup> Special provisions may apply to any student, depending on the circumstances. In making a decision about special provisions, the school is required to consider what adjustments to assessment conditions are reasonable in the circumstances.

The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) *Equity Statement* (August 2006) underpins all curriculum development and assessment in Queensland; it states that “all young people in Queensland have a right to gain an education that meets their needs and prepares them for active participation in the creation of a socially just, equitable and democratic global society”.

This policy on special provisions should be read in conjunction with the *Equity Statement* and with our policy on *Late and Non-submission of Student Responses to Assessment Instruments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects* (January 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> Reasonable adjustments are defined in Part 3 of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. See the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for a copy of the standards <[www.dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au)>



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## Scope of application of this policy

This policy covers only school-based assessment that is quality assured by the QSA for Authority and Authority-registered subjects.

The policy therefore does not apply to the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test, the Senior External Examination, the scaling for Overall Positions (OPs) and Field Positions (FPs), and the Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA). Separate processes and procedures apply for these.<sup>2</sup>

Assessment that is quality assured by other jurisdictions, such as assessment for vocational education and training within the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and approved assessment by other agencies, also is not covered by this policy.<sup>3</sup>

This policy is not intended for use in situations where a critical incident (e.g. disaster, emergency, traumatic event) has significantly impacted the school community and students. In these cases, schools should contact the QSA for advice and support.

## Specific educational needs

Special provisions may be particularly relevant for students with specific educational needs. These needs must be considered in a proactive way — to design inclusive learning and assessment programs, and to provide opportunities for alternative assessment arrangements.

Students with specific educational needs include but are not limited to:

- students with disabilities that have a physiological basis, such as those of a sensory, motor or neurological nature<sup>4</sup>
- students with educational needs arising primarily from socioeconomic, cultural and/or linguistic factors where there may be some form of educational disadvantage, such as students:
  - of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
  - with language backgrounds other than English
  - who are migrants or refugees
  - from rural and remote locations
  - in low socioeconomic circumstances
- students whose difficulties in accessing learning do not appear to be directly or primarily attributable to educational disadvantage arising from impairment, or to socioeconomic, cultural and/or linguistic factors or

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<sup>2</sup> The relevant policies and procedures are detailed on the QSA website <[www.qsa.qld.edu.au](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au)>.

<sup>3</sup> See the Reasonable Adjustments in the 2007 AQTF Standards <[www.training.com.au/aqtf2007](http://www.training.com.au/aqtf2007)>.

<sup>4</sup> Disability is used here as an inclusive term, covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. The World Health Organization defines an impairment as a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation as a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; and a participation restriction as a problem experienced by an individual while involved in life situations. See the WHO website, accessed January 2009 <[www.who.int/topics/disabilities](http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities)>.

- psychological needs (e.g. students who have short-term impairments such as glandular fever, fractured limbs, etc.)
- students with identifiably different patterns of educational development and orientation, influenced by factors such as:
    - gender, for example, the inclusion of learning resources relevant to both females and males
    - special talents (including giftedness), with opportunities for extension programs to be experienced
    - life circumstances that may impact on a student's opportunity to engage in learning and be assessed fairly.

## Responsibilities

Under the Australian Government's Disability Standards for Education 2005, schools are responsible for making special provisions in school-based assessments. The QSA strongly recommends that schools become familiar with these standards. Each school is responsible for designing the assessment program within the requirements of the relevant syllabus or study area specification, as well as meeting the quality assurance processes for Authority and Authority-registered subjects.<sup>5</sup> However, the QSA may provide advice on special provisions to schools, based on the principles outlined in this document and the QSA's *Equity Statement*.

## Principles

- Special provisions is a positive act of making reasonable adjustment to assessment requirements and conditions to ensure that assessment is equitable for all students. All students, including those with specific educational needs, should have opportunities to demonstrate their current knowledge and skills.
- Schools must strive to identify and minimise barriers that prevent students from demonstrating their current knowledge and skills. To do this, they must plan to ensure that specific educational needs are recognised and reasonable adjustments made to accommodate students. Schools must also take reasonable measures to assess students with specific educational needs so that they can participate in Authority and Authority-registered subjects on the same basis as other students.
- Reasonable adjustments for students with specific educational needs must be planned and negotiated as early as possible so that students can be provided with appropriate support in order to commence, participate and complete course of study requirements.
- Special provisions involve the application of relevant syllabus criteria and standards against which achievement is judged. Assessment criteria and standards are not modified to suit particular students. The school is required to maintain the intent and rigour of the syllabus or study area specification and any other requirements or components that are inherent

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<sup>5</sup> See also the section on educational equity in QSA senior syllabuses and study area specifications.

or essential to the course of study.<sup>6</sup> Special provisions do not involve compensating for what the student does not know or cannot do.

- The school must consult and involve the student (and, where appropriate, the student's parents/carers or associates and other relevant school personnel) in the decision-making process concerning special provisions. The school must take into account the student's specific educational needs and balance the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student, the school, staff and other students.

## Guidelines

Each case must be considered on an individual basis and decisions reached through consultation.

The principal and teachers of the school, with the advice and assistance of the QSA (if required), should:

- consult with the student and the student's parents/carers or associates regarding any preferred adjustments, any adjustments that have been provided previously and any recommended or alternative adjustments
- take into account the nature of a student's disability or the reason for the student's specific educational needs
- consider the effects of the adjustment on the student, including the effect on the student's ability to achieve the learning outcomes and to participate in courses of study, and the effect on their independence
- identify assessment instruments that may require reasonable adjustment for students with specific educational needs
- seek advice from other relevant personnel if considered necessary
- make decisions about the nature and appropriateness of the adjustments. This may include considering the costs and benefits of making the adjustment
- assess whether changes are needed to the adjustment over the period of a student's education in order to allow for the changing needs of the student over time.

Students with specific educational needs often require adjustment to the form of presentation of an assessment instrument and their response to it. The method of transmission of information about the assessment and the way a student presents evidence of their knowledge and skills may have to be adapted.

When making these adjustments, the principles and practices for high quality assessment should apply at all times.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Federalist Paper 2: The Future of Schooling in Australia* (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007) refers to "a commitment to rigorous curriculum standards" and clause 3.4(3) of the Australian Government Disability *Standards for Education 2005* states that a school is entitled to maintain the academic requirements of the course or program and other requirements or components that are inherent in or essential to its nature.

<sup>7</sup> See Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities 1995, *Guidelines for Assessment Quality and Equity* <<http://acaca.bos.nsw.edu.au/go/acaca-documents/>>.

The school should ensure that the steps taken to identify and implement special provisions maintain respect for the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of the student, their parents/carers and associates.

## Reasonable educational adjustments

These involve varying the conditions under which assessment occurs in order to enable students to have opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a course of study

Examples of reasonable adjustments include, but are not limited to:

- permitting signing instead of speaking for students with hearing impairments, and computer simulation instead of laboratory work for students with physical impairments
- allowing the use of specialised equipment to accommodate a student's disability (e.g. keyboarding rather than handwriting)
- providing a reader to communicate a text where reading is not the skill being assessed, or providing a scribe to produce an exact transcription of student responses to assessment items where a physical impairment does not permit a student to write
- providing assistance with the interpretation and comprehension of assessment items for students with language difficulties (e.g. students with language backgrounds other than English) as long as this assistance occurs for assessment items that are not designed to assess those language skills
- allowing additional time for students to complete assessable tasks (e.g. written tests or assignments) to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant and refugee students the opportunity to present their cultural experiences in responses to assessment items (e.g. providing an alternative essay question, in consultation with the students, that allows them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the subject by applying it to their own cultural context).

## Exemption (allowing non-completion of some particular piece of assessment)

- An exemption should only be allowed when there is sufficient alternative information to make a judgment about an exit level of achievement without the student having to complete a particular assessment instrument. For example, an exemption may be appropriate where a student has missed an assessment instrument due to illness or because of some other legitimate absence, and completing the assessment would place an unreasonable burden on the student.
- An exemption is inappropriate if it results in insufficient evidence being available to make a judgment about the student's exit level of achievement, or the student being unable to meet the mandatory requirements stated in a syllabus or study area specification.

- Exemptions should not be a substitute for schools making efforts to remove barriers to a student's access to learning and assessment opportunities. Exemption is not an option where reasonable adjustment is appropriate.

## **Quality assurance processes**

Folios of students who have been given special provisions do not generally need to be submitted for review for the purposes of quality assurance of Authority and Authority-registered subjects. The exceptions are when these students are part of small groups for which all folios are submitted or when a particular sample student folio is required. In these cases a brief supporting statement describing the nature of reasonable adjustments can be attached to the folio to help the review panel provide appropriate advice.

# Late Submission and Non-submission of Student Responses to Assessment Instruments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects

January 2009

## Introduction

This policy defines the responsibilities and principles for managing the late submission and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments in Authority and Authority-registered subjects. It does not apply to situations where students' reasons for late submission or non-submission relate to specific educational needs. In such cases, schools should refer to the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) *Policy on Special Provisions for School-based Assessments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects* (2009).

In Queensland's system of externally moderated school-based assessment, schools need to have policies and practices that encourage the participation and engagement of students in their assessment programs. In all cases, schools are responsible for developing and managing these policies and practices.

To ensure the integrity of the levels of achievement reported for senior certification, students must meet the mandatory requirements of a syllabus for Authority and Authority-registered subjects. The mandatory requirements are stated in all syllabuses.

## Late submission of student responses to an assessment instrument

This relates to students not submitting a response to an assessment instrument by the due date. The practice of awarding a lower standard as a penalty for lateness is not valid in a standards-based system of externally moderated school-based assessment. Judgments of student achievement in Authority and Authority-registered subjects are made by matching a body of evidence provided by students' responses to assessment instruments to the standards associated with exit criteria outlined in the relevant syllabus. In cases where students do not submit a response to an assessment instrument by the due date, judgments should be made using evidence available on or before the due date.



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## Non-submission of student responses to an assessment instrument

This relates to the non-submission of student responses to an assessment instrument. A standard can only be awarded where evidence has been demonstrated. In cases of non-submission of student responses, an “E” standard can not be awarded where there is no evidence for it. Judgments of student achievement in Authority and Authority-registered subjects are made by matching a body of evidence provided by students’ responses to assessment instruments to the standards descriptors outlined in the relevant syllabus.

## Principles for establishing school policies on late and non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments

A school policy should incorporate the following principles:

- Judgments of student responses to assessment instruments are made using standards associated with exit criteria.
- Procedures are enacted consistently across subjects within the school.
- In cases of late submission of student responses to assessment instruments, judgments are based on evidence available on or before the due date.
- In cases of non-submission of student responses to assessment instruments, standards are not awarded when there is no evidence.

## Related documents

The following documents are available from the QSA website.

- QSA 2009, *Policy on Special Provisions for School-based Assessments in Authority and Authority-Registered Subjects*.
- QSA 2009, *Strategies for a School-based Policy for Late and Non-Submission of Student Responses to Assessment Instruments*.
- QSA 2008, *Sufficiency of Coverage and Adequacy of Assessment for Students to Receive Results on a Senior Statement*, QSA Memo no 091/08, 12 November 2008.
- Relevant QSA syllabus documents.