



CS Taking a look at assessment and reporting in 2000

Q. What does a standards-referenced approach mean?

A. The new Higher School Certificate (HSC) will use a standards-referenced approach to assessing and reporting student achievement.

This means that the achievements of students are assessed and reported against specified standards that are established for each course. In a standards-referenced approach, students are recognised for what they know, understand and can do. The mark they receive will reflect the standard which the student has achieved in the course.

The current HSC uses a norm-referenced approach. In this approach, fixed percentages of students are placed into bands of marks according to a pre-determined distribution. This occurs regardless of what students know, understand and can do, and fails to recognise the standard which the student has demonstrated in terms of achievement of course outcomes.

Q. What are the “standards”?

A. In the new Higher School Certificate these standards are:

- the knowledge, skills and understanding expected to be learned by students as a result of studying the course, referred to as the *syllabus* standards
- the levels of achievement of the knowledge, skills and understanding (reported in six bands), referred to as the *performance* standards.

Syllabus standards and *performance* standards are based on the aims, objectives, outcomes and content of a course. Together, they specify what is to be learned and how well it is to be achieved.

Q. How will the changes to the new HSC affect school policies and procedures?

A. The Board of Studies ACE Manual remains current for the year 2000. Schools should ensure that they are familiar with the HSC requirements concerning policy and procedures, as set down in this manual.

School policies and procedures will need to reflect the Board’s requirements for the HSC internal assessment, as stated in the ACE Manual (check with the Board of Studies).

Aspects of policy and procedure which must be developed and implemented by schools include:

- informing students in writing of the assessment requirements for each course before the commencement of the HSC course
- ensuring that students are given adequate written notice of the nature and timing of assessment tasks
- providing meaningful feedback on students’ performance in all assessment tasks
- maintaining records of marks awarded to each student for all assessment tasks
- addressing issues relating to illness, misadventure and malpractice in assessment tasks
- addressing issues relating to the late submission and non-completion of assessment tasks
- advising students in writing if they are not meeting the assessment requirements in a course and indicating what is necessary to enable the students to satisfy the requirements
- informing students about their entitlements to school reviews and appeals to the Board
- conducting school reviews of assessments when requested by students
- ensuring that students are aware that they can collect their Rank Order Advice at the end of the external examinations at their school.

Schools will need to ensure that they understand the new mandatory assessment requirements of different courses by checking the relevant syllabuses. These changes to requirements need to be incorporated into school policy and procedures.

The Board still requires schools to develop an internal assessment program that:

- specifies the various assessment tasks and weightings allocated to each task
- provides a schedule of the tasks designed for the whole course.

Q. How will changes to the new HSC affect my assessment practices?

A. The white paper envisaged that changes to assessment practice would occur over several years, commencing in 2001.



Teachers should follow school policies and procedures and syllabus guidelines for assessment and reporting. They need to ensure that course requirements are followed in terms of the balance and weighting of components and types of tasks. What is important is that the strategies used to assess students are appropriate to the outcomes being assessed.

Teachers need to provide a mark for internal assessment tasks. These marks should be derived from the students' achievement against selected criteria.

Appropriate feedback should be given to students to inform them about what they need to learn and do in order to improve their achievement in a subject.

Q. What are good assessment practices?

- A. Teachers demonstrate good assessment practices when they:
- design and use assessment strategies which are directly linked to and reflect the course outcomes and the standards expected
 - provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate their achievement of outcomes in a variety of types of task
 - consider the type of assessment task being used, ensuring that it is appropriate to the outcomes being assessed
 - inform the students of the assessment criteria on which the assessment task is to be judged, before the task is undertaken
 - design for each task marking schemes which are aligned to the syllabus standards
 - provide students with meaningful feedback about what they are able to do and what is needed to improve performance
 - determine rankings and relative difference between students by level of achievement of the standards.

Q. Will the new HSC examination be different from the current examination?

- A. HSC examination questions will be developed from the examination specifications. Teachers will need to check the examination specifications for each course they teach. Most courses have had changes made to their exam specifications as a result of the review process.

HSC examinations will now assess against standards. They will do this by using a variety of question types to enable students to demonstrate their level of achievement of course outcomes. Questions will be clearly worded and structured to indicate to students what is expected and will reflect a range and balance of course content and outcomes. Marking guidelines will be developed which will align with the performance standards. Examinations will be marked using teachers' professional judgement to determine the standard of students' performance, and the marks awarded will reflect the standard.

Q. What are non-examination type tasks?

- A. Some examples of non-examination type tasks include:
- laboratory reports
 - computer simulations, multimedia presentations
 - interviews, surveys, seminars
 - debates, hypotheticals
 - case study reports
 - oral presentations
 - community-based fieldwork
 - research reports
 - participant observation and analysis
 - dramatic presentations
 - interpretation of scenarios, statistics
 - co-operative learning tasks
 - investigation and analysis tasks
 - audio-visual presentation or analysis
 - practical performances to demonstrate theoretical understanding.

Q. What are performance scales and performance bands?

- A. Students who successfully complete the HSC Course will have their performance reported against performance bands on a course report.

The course report includes a performance scale which describes five levels (bands) of achievement above a minimum standard expected. Each band on the performance scale (except band 1) includes descriptions that summarise the attainments typically demonstrated on that band.



Students who meet or exceed the minimum standard receive a mark of 50 or more. The mark awarded to a student will reflect the standard achieved in the course.

Performance scales can assist in internal assessment programs as they can be used to determine the wording of marking schemes and feedback to students.

Q. What do I need to understand about performance bands?

A. Teachers need to understand that the performance bands are used only to report students' achievement at the end of the course. They provide a summative description of a student's overall performance in a subject, based on internal assessment and the external examination.

Teachers need to recognise that the development of performance bands is an evolving process, in which the bands will continue to be refined to include information from performance in the new HSC courses and the outcomes assessed internally.

Support for teachers in developing an understanding of performance bands will include:

- State-wide workshops (LIG events) in November, which will specifically focus on assessment in the new HSC.
- New HSC Bulletins. Four HSC Bulletins are being developed to address issues concerning assessment and reporting in the HSC. The first bulletin is on *Assessment—A Standards-Referenced Approach*. Other issues that will be addressed include: the role of internal assessment; developing assessment tasks; reporting student achievement.
- Board of Studies support documents, including the *Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement* for each course.

Q. At the end of the HSC, what will I need to submit to the Board of Studies?

A. As in previous years, schools will provide the Board with a mark only. These marks are the product of the internal assessment program and should indicate the rank order of the students and the relative differences between the students.

This mark will provide a summation of each student's achievement, measured at points throughout the course.

Teachers will make informed judgements about the relative difference between students, based on their differing achievement of standards.

Q. What will happen to the internal assessment mark which I submit to the Board?

A. For each school course group, the school assessment marks submitted to the Board of Studies will be moderated on the basis of the group's performance in the HSC examination. The approach to be used will be the same as at present, except that the raw examination marks will be used in the moderation process.

For each course, the moderated assessment and the examination mark will be averaged to provide a composite mark.

Experienced markers will follow a structured procedure, employing their professional judgement to determine what composite marks will correspond to the borderline between each performance band. This step provides a set of "mapping points" that enable students' marks to be aligned with the performance scale.

For each student in a course, the moderated assessment mark and the examination mark are separately aligned with the performance scale.

The average of a student's assessment mark and the examination mark, after alignment to the performance scale, is then reported as the student's HSC mark.

Q. What will students receive in terms of an HSC?

A. Students will receive:

- The HSC testamur (if all requirements are met).
- A Record of Achievement which summarises results awarded in each course.
- A course report for each Board-developed course. This will show the moderated internal assessment mark, the external examination mark and the averaged HSC mark on a performance scale. This report also includes statements of a typical performance which a student would demonstrate in each band.
- VET credentials.



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New Stage 6 syllabuses

“Calendar of events” for HSIE

By now many of you have had the opportunity to participate in subject-specific events being held in many locations around the state. These are full-day events which assist teachers to understand the changes to the new HSC as it affects each particular subject.

A team of HSC Project Officers have been selected from schools. They have developed presentations as a team and with the assistance of a consultative group of teachers in each subject.

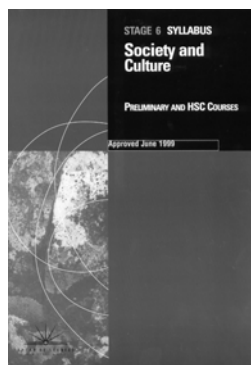
Geography	Jenny Carriage Eagle Vale HS
History	Alex Summers Castle Hill HS
Economics Business Studies	Heather Brown Sefton HS
Legal Studies	Julie Pickworth Windsor HS
Aboriginal Studies	Eileen Murphy Port Macquarie HS
Society and Culture	Peter Dean Penshurst Girls HS

If you have been unable to attend one of these workshops, the handouts and overheads will all be available on the New HSC web site later this term.

The changing nature of Society and Culture

With the arrival of a new Society and Culture syllabus, teachers have the opportunity to investigate and absorb the changes that have taken place, not just to the structure and layout, but also to the specific content of the syllabus.

It is important to note that some of the most significant changes to subject matter have occurred in the Preliminary Course. While the titles of the HSC depth studies sound at least familiar to our



ears, the Preliminary Course has a whole new look. It includes three new depth studies, of which only two have a familiar feel about them.

Minor revisions have occurred for the first two sections of the Preliminary Course. The syllabus now begins with *The social and cultural world*, which provides a succinct introduction to the course, and many of its features will seem familiar. This familiar feel carries through to the second depth study, *Personal and social identity*, which replaces *Adolescence*. However, the most significant change to the content in the Preliminary Course is the abolition of *Power & authority* and its replacement with a previous HSC depth study, *Intercultural communication*.

In no way can it be argued that *Power and authority* has been removed from the syllabus. Instead *Power and authority*, like gender, continuity and change and technology, has been integrated throughout the syllabus in both the HSC and Preliminary courses. This integration provides a significant change to both sections of the course and represents an important point that needs to be absorbed when looking at changes to other content areas.

To replace *Power and authority*, *Intercultural communication* has become the third depth study in the Preliminary Course. The skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to this depth study are crucial to students' achievement of the aim of the course: social and cultural literacy. Although the title sounds familiar, especially to those who have been teaching it in the HSC Course, there are some significant changes to its internal structure. To reflect the need for strengthening the global aspects of Society and Culture, the depth study focuses on a cross-cultural examination of Australia and another selected country. This is to be achieved through a study of communication and intercultural understanding.

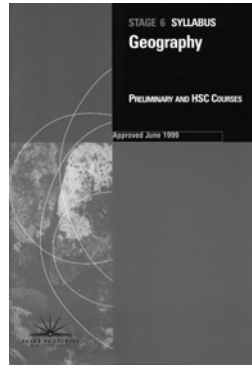
These changes to the content, although minor in comparison with the revisions in many other subjects, are still significant, especially given that these major changes occur in the Preliminary Course that begins in 2000. With this change in mind it is important that sufficient time is given to the adaptation of resources as well as to teaching and learning strategies that reflect the new changes and emphasis.

Linking the teaching strategies to the outcomes will help to ensure that students have the right focus when implementing these changes.

The relevance of fieldwork in geography

What are the syllabus requirements for fieldwork?

The new HSC Geography Syllabus now mandates that “10% of the indicative time for each of the Preliminary and HSC courses should be allocated to relevant fieldwork activities.” Moreover, it is suggested that 30% of the student’s assessment mark in the Preliminary Course and 10% of the assessment in the HSC Course be derived from fieldwork.



What are fieldwork activities?

Fieldwork activities are planned activities which are integrated into the Stage 6 Geography course to enhance students’ understanding of geographical environments.

Fieldwork can occur locally or further afield. Fieldwork can include opportunities to develop such skills as observation, recording, interpretation of data and communication.

What are the benefits of fieldwork for students?

Fieldwork is one teaching strategy that is able to cater for students’ different learning styles. Effective fieldwork can assist students to achieve a number of the outcomes of the Stage 6 Geography course. Benefits can include:

- the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of geographical phenomena in the “real world”.
- an increased interest in and appreciation of the spatial and ecological dimensions of geography
- the development of skills of observation, interpretation and communication and the use of various geographical tools
- participating as a member of a working team.

How can fieldwork be most effective?

Focussing on the achievement of an outcome or outcomes from the Stage 6 syllabus or focus area, teachers should prepare fieldwork activities that incorporate some aspect of field research, including the development of inquiry-based skills. By formulating an hypothesis through the identification of a relevant geographical problem or issue, students

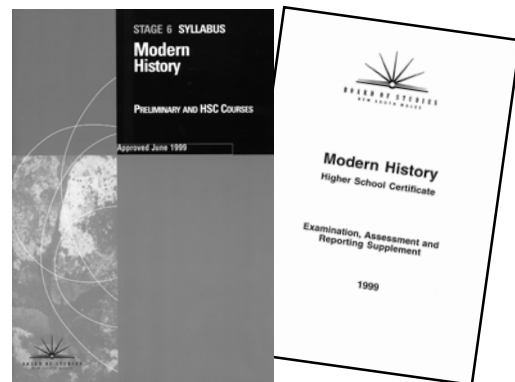
should be able to develop such skills as designing research methodology and analysing collected data, as well as the more traditional skills of simple observation, sketch mapping or notetaking.

In summary, fieldwork activities should:

- be well planned, time effective and interesting
- include a range and variety of appropriate activities to provide opportunities for all students to achieve success
- be integrated into the focus area through the “learn to” and “learn about” statements
- be supported by activities before and after the event to reinforce the outcome being achieved.

The importance of independent research in ancient and modern history

The new HSC program of study mentions students’ capacity to manage their own learning. The new syllabuses in ancient and modern history are strongly committed to the outcomes approach. For teachers and students this will mean a new way of thinking and learning.



In the Modern History Preliminary core study, many of the “learn to” points emphasise the importance of and commitment to independent student research. A closer look at the syllabus includes examples, “gather, select and organise information from a range of primary and secondary sources” and “use the available information technologies to gather information in relation to the world at the beginning of the twentieth century”.

These “learn tos” feature in the outcomes, e.g. Modern History Preliminary core study (P5.2), “plans an historical investigation, analyses and synthesises historical information from a variety of perspectives and presents findings of the investigation”.



The textbook, although important, will need to be supplemented by student research, undertaken in part in class time, but more often motivated students will conduct their own historiographical research.

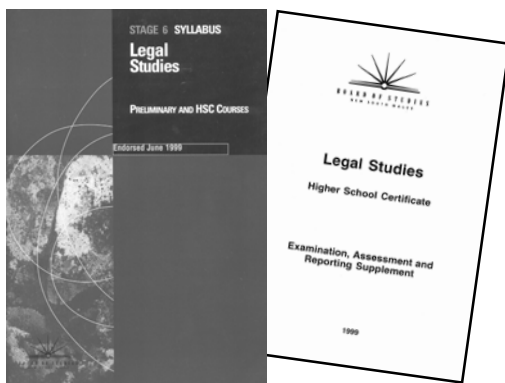
Teachers should encourage the use of larger libraries, historical associations, university museums and other staff members, who could discuss historical perspectives and interpretations with students.

Finding the latest evidence is now possible by using the Internet to obtain fast answers to recent investigations. A recent case study would be the Mayan discoveries excavated in Mexico. Returning to the same web site over a period of time should help in using “a range of relevant ancient sources” and evaluating their reliability.

Students should be encouraged to research, explore and gather as much material as possible to assist in their historical investigations. Independent research correctly undertaken gives a student a heightened appreciation for the course studied, which results in better learning techniques and improved understanding of the subject.

Terms and strategies in Legal Studies

The Stage 6 Legal Studies Syllabus sees the introduction of mandatory outcomes for students studying this subject. Teachers will need to focus on assisting students to achieve, to their full potential, the outcomes of the course.



The Preliminary Course outcomes require students to be able to identify, describe, explain, discuss, investigate, select, organise, investigate and create a variety of text types.

The HSC Course outcomes require students to be able to apply, assess, compare and contrast, evaluate, analyse and synthesise legal information.

The Board of Studies document, *The New Higher School Certificate: Assessment Support Document*, contains a glossary of key words (pages 19 and 20). This document will assist teachers and students in understanding what is expected in response to the course outcomes contained in the syllabus.

The glossary of key terms can also provide a focus for teachers in the development of classroom strategies to assist their students to achieve the course outcomes. These terms will be a useful guide in determining strategies, for example, that help students in their acquisition and learning of factual knowledge. Key glossary terms, such as *describe*, *define*, *identify* and *recall*, could be incorporated into class activities that require students to gain knowledge.

Key glossary terms, including *account*, *analyse*, *appreciate*, *assess*, *clarify*, *contrast*, *deduce*, *extract*, *extrapolate*, *interpret*, *justify*, *predict*, *propose* and *synthesise*, could be incorporated into classroom activities to “empower the students to think critically on the role of law and legal institutions in society”. (Syllabus, page 6.)

Classroom strategies such as writing editorials, debating issues, examining media, and predicting or recommending the ending to a legal issue, can be used to highlight the importance of critical thought.

Some useful web sites for the Stage 6 syllabus

Parliament of Australia

www.aphh.gov.au/ provides access to a wide range of information about the structure, role and function of the NSW Parliament.

Legal Information Access Centre

www.slsw.gov.au/liac/welcome.htm has links to Hot Topics and links to Case Law at a variety of other useful sites.

High Court of Australia

www.h.court.gov.au/Library.htm provides information on the library, outlines the history of this court and explains its operation; it even has links to planning an excursion to the court.



Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

www.hreoc.gov.au/ provides information on legal aid in NSW, plus links to other sites.

Australasian Legal Information Institute

www.austlii.edu.au/ is a joint production of the law faculties of the University of Technology and the University of NSW.

Professional Association

The Legal Studies Association of NSW is holding an evening focusing on assessment using criteria. It is planned to have a speaker address the issue of marking using criteria and run a practical workshop on this subject.

Date: Monday 30th August 1999, 4.30pm-8.00pm
 Venue: La Valla Room
 St Patrick's Marist College
 151 Kirby St, Dundas
 Cost: \$10 members
 \$15 non-members

A light supper will be provided.

The use of media in the new Business Studies and Economics Syllabuses

The Business Studies and Economics Syllabuses require students to achieve a number of common skills-based outcomes. For example, a student:

- selects, organises and evaluates information from a variety of sources
- communicates ideas, information and concepts in appropriate forms
- works independently and in groups to achieve appropriate goals in set time frames.

To achieve these skills-based outcomes, teachers could direct some teaching and learning strategies toward using the media and, in particular, newspapers.

To effectively incorporate the media into teaching programs for the Stage 6 syllabuses, content could be directed at the achievement of knowledge outcomes. In the Economics Syllabus, such knowledge outcomes could include:

- P7: identifies the nature and causes of economic problems and issues for individuals, firms and governments

- H7: evaluates the consequences of contemporary economic problems and issues on individuals, firms and governments.

In the Business Studies Syllabus, knowledge outcomes could include:

- P4.1: explains the interrelationship between the internal and external factors on business
- H1.2: critically analyses the role of business in Australia.

What are the benefits of newspapers?

Newspapers are a great source for educational material. They provide an inexpensive and up-to-date source of information on current issues, world and local news. They reflect what is happening politically, economically, socially and artistically, and are an excellent resource for all students of Economics and Business Studies. They empower students to gather knowledge and understandings and to develop skills in organising and evaluating information, whilst working with actual facts or data.

As teachers, we should provoke students to be curious about what is taking place in our world, and encourage learners to enjoy reading the daily newspaper, so that they become discerning readers who are motivated to participate more fully in the community through their awareness of important issues.

Professional Association

Economics and Business Educators NSW

3-4 September

A two-day conference on planning for the implementation of the new Stage 6 Economics Syllabus. Lectures and workshop sessions will be held on programming, teaching and assessment strategies for the new Preliminary Economics Syllabus.

17-18 September

A two-day conference on planning for the implementation of the new Stage 6 Business Studies Syllabus. Lectures and workshop sessions will be held on programming, teaching and assessment strategies for the new Preliminary Business Studies Syllabus.

All enquiries and applications to:

EBE NSW
 PO Box 67
 Leichhardt NSW 2040
 Phone: (02) 9564 5007
 Fax: (02) 9564 5309



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Support for new HSC syllabuses

What has already been provided?

From the Board of Studies:

- Stage 6 syllabus (Preliminary and HSC Courses)
- Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement
- An Introduction to the Stage 6 syllabus in the New HSC (4 pages)

From the Department of Education and Training:

- New HSC Bulletins: "Enhancing learning", Issues 1 and 2, including School Development Day liftout from Bulletin No. 2
- New HSC Assessment Bulletins (all sectors): "A Standards-Referenced Approach", Issue 1
- **CURRICULUM SUPPORT for teaching in HSIE K-12:** New HSC Supplement. (See also the new series for vocational education.)

What further support is there?

From the Board of Studies:

- Syllabus support material (Term 4)

From the Department of Education and Training:

- New HSC web site <http://www.newhsc.schools.nsw.edu.au>
- HSC On-Line site <http://hsc.csu.edu.au/>
- New HSC Bulletins: "Enhancing learning", issues 3 and 4
- New HSC Assessment Bulletins (all sectors) Two more issues: *Internal assessment*, *Communicating assessment information*
- **CURRICULUM SUPPORT for teaching in HSIE K-12:** New HSC Supplement each term. (See also the vocational education series).

From professional teachers' associations:

- Conferences
- Journals

HSC Aboriginal Studies Project Display, 1999

This annual display has previously been very successful in promoting the importance of the HSC Aboriginal Studies course and also in showcasing the high quality of work achieved by individual students undertaking this study. This year it will be held at the Southern Cross University (30 August to 14 September), Albury Regional Museum (6-27 October), and the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney (10-26 November).

The project is an important component of the course and provides students with a unique opportunity to develop their research skills and to gain an understanding of Aboriginal life and culture.

These innovative projects include artworks, research papers, audio-visual materials, local community profiles, profiles of high-achieving Aboriginal people and current Aboriginal issues.

For further enquiries, please contact the Aboriginal Studies Team in the Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, telephone (02) 9886 7675.