The Senior Certificate: A New Deal

Queensland. Department of Education, 2002 (written by John A. Pitman and Paul Herschell)

Overview of the document

357 page report which results from a year-long research project to see if the Senior Certificate should be changed to assist the Government's goal of increasing the number of young people completing Year 12. It is divided into five levels according to depth and level of detail. Level 1 includes a vision statement, executive summary, and complete set of recommendations. Level 2 is a narrative that interweaves key issues and proposals. Level 3 comprises 8 position papers. Level 4 focuses on project research. Level 5 comprises appendices.

Keywords

Senior Certificate; Senior Stage of Education; Worthwhile Learning; moderation; standards-referenced assessment; learning; Fresh Start; Senior Agreements; curriculum; mentoring; disengagement; pedagogy; threshold quantum.

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LEVEL 1: THE BIG PICTURE
Vision Statement:
➢ States that "All young people take up their entitlement to experience and complete a post-initial stage of education in which they engage successfully in Worthwhile Learning in whatever educational environments meet their needs. This is recognised by enabling students, over time and under the auspices of a school, to qualify for the award of a Senior Certificate by aggregating achievements in a broad and balanced range of learnings. As a result of their educational experience, students are eager and able to pursue lifelong learning, and do so – formally and informally – as life chances present themselves." (p. 5)

Executive Summary
➢ States that "The report recommends initiatives designed to ensure that as many young people as possible take up their entitlement to a full senior secondary education through reform of the entire certification process in Queensland." (p. 7)
➢ Notes that the Senior Certificate is the culmination of learning in the senior years.
➢ Identifies the following desired outcomes:
  o "Completion by all young people of the Senior Stage of Education.
  o A Senior Certificate that records learning in areas that enhance students' post-Senior destination options as well as provides for their personal growth and development.
  o A Senior Stage of Education with a focus on the skills necessary to engage productively in an increasingly complex world.
  o A Senior Stage of Education and an associated Senior Certificate that build on the current system of moderated standards-referenced assessment.
  o A Senior Certificate that is issued on the basis of achieving at least a threshold quantum of Worthwhile Learning.
  o Young people with personal commitment, individualised incentives and achievable goals, able to plan individual journeys through a flexible and inclusive Senior Stage of Education.
  o A pivotal decision-making role for the school in facilitating learning for each student through coordinating access to learning resources throughout the community.
  o Ongoing advice, encouragement and advocacy for students disengaged from schooling.
  o Space for teachers to focus more intensely on their core business: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

- Clearly delineated roles, responsibilities and accountabilities in the processes leading to the certification of student learning.
- Opportunities for tertiary institutions to make judgments about selection for entry based on all Worthwhile Learning in the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 7)

Recommendations

1. The Senior Stage of Education

➢ Makes the following Principal Recommendations:

1.1 "That, by 2010, the award of a Senior Certificate mark the completion of the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 10)

1.2 "That Learning be the focus of the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 10)

1.3 That the Senior Stage of Education be characterised by: flexible entry and exit points; variable rates of progression, including options for part-time study and deferment; flexibility and diversity in curriculum offerings; students exercising choice; and students with individualised commitments to learning.

1.4 "That the Senior Certificate be founded on current assessment practices in Senior; in particular, on moderated standards-referenced assessment." (p. 10)

1.5 "That students be enrolled at a school throughout the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 10)

1.6 "That Senior Certificates be issued more that once per year." (p. 10)

➢ Makes the following Operational Recommendations:

1.7 "That, during the Senior Stage of Education, learning occur in schools, communities, workplaces, training institutions, tertiary institutions and combinations of the above." (p. 10)

1.8 "That the Senior Stage of Education allow for various combinations of study (full- or part-time), work (full- or part-time), or deferment, over different periods of time." (p. 10)

1.9 "That no minimum or maximum period of time be prescribed for a student to complete the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 10)

1.10 "That most students embark on their Senior Stage of Education within what is currently Year 10." (p. 10)

1.11 "That each student judged to be disengaged from schooling and/or school learning be eligible to embark on the Senior Stage of Education with a Fresh Start that offers the student, without prejudice, an opportunity to recommence learning, but in different environments, under a new set of conditions, and according to a new set of protocols." (p. 10)

1.12 That each school establish policy and procedures for Fresh Starts that: identify likely candidates; provide maximum opportunities for participating students to achieve success, however limited initially; provide goals, plans, structure, support and encouragement for participating students; and make Fresh Starts available, as needed, to students before what is currently Year 10.

2: Domains of Learning for the Senior Certificate

➢ Makes the following Principal Recommendations:

2.1 "That the Senior Stage of Education encompass Worthwhile Learning: learnings that are worthwhile, appropriate to this stage, and that enhance student access to post-Senior destinations." (p. 11)

2.2 That the Senior Certificate record achievement levels in Worthwhile Learning in four domains; namely:

- Syllabus-based Learning; that is, learning associated with: Board subjects, as currently designated; Board-registered subjects, as currently designated; approved VET training packages; and any other syllabus package accredited by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA).
- Experiential Learning; that is, specific skills, knowledges and dispositions associated with: personal growth and development; personal career management; and management of personal finances.
- Generic Skills that are clustered thus: the CCEs as assessed by the QCS Test; Foundation Literacy; Foundation Numeracy; Creating & Producing; and Making Judgments & Decisions.
- Non-syllabus-based Learning; that is, other learning deemed eligible for inclusion on the Senior Certificate. (p. 11)

➤ Makes the following Operational Recommendations:

2.3 "That the QSA continue to approve syllabuses, training packages and other learning parcels for the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 11)

2.4 "That all students complete Experiential Learnings in all three Areas (Personal Growth & Development, Personal Career Management, and Management of Personal Finances)." (p. 11)

2.5 "That assessment of achievement in Experiential Learning be based on a student's culminating presentation/report of the sort exemplified by New Basics Rich Tasks." (p. 11)

2.6 "That, for each Area of Experiential Learning, the QSA develop Area-specific Frameworks, including assessment criteria, for the design of individualised student tasks." (p. 11)

2.7 "That each Area-specific Framework specify the skills, knowledges and dispositions to be developed using transdisciplinary, real-world and problem-based approaches." (p. 11)

2.8 "That students negotiate the design of individual Experiential Learnings with their school." (p. 11)

2.9 "That, although any Experiential Learning can commence during the Initial Phase of Education, for credit on the Senior Certificate it must culminate during the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 11)

2.10 "That each Experiential Learning be graded on a five-point scale." (p. 11)

2.11 "That a process of sample moderation be applied to establish and maintain statewide standards in Experiential Learning." (p. 11)

2.12 "That achievement in Generic Skills as evidenced by QCS Test performance be recorded on the Senior Certificate as:

- a grade denoting overall performance on the test;
- a grade in Creating & Producing derived from a subset of QCS items;
- a grade in Making Judgments & Decisions derived from a subset of QCS items." (p. 12)

2.13 That available grades for reporting overall QCS performance be extended to include:

- the grade of A+, when students demonstrate outstanding achievement across the test papers;
- Non-graded (N), when students demonstrate no meaningful learnings. (p. 12)

2.14 "That the QCS Test Specifications remain unchanged but that research be

undertaken to establish the number of meaningful grades that can be extracted in Creating & Producing and Making Judgments & Decisions." (p. 12)

    2.15   That achievement in the generic skills of literacy and numeracy be recorded on the Senior Certificate as:

- Foundation Literacy expressed through any one of the following: success on a statewide, standards-based Year 9 literacy test; an overall QCS grade of D or above; or some other display of literacy, at a prescribed standard set by the QSA, in one or more of the other domains of Worthwhile Learning.
- Foundation Numeracy expressed through any one of the following: success on a statewide standards-based Year 9 numeracy test; an overall QCS grade of D or above; or some other display of numeracy, at a prescribed standard set by the QSA, in one or more of the other domains of Worthwhile Learning. (p. 12)

    2.16   "That, achievement in the domain of Non-syllabus-based Learning be certificated on a three-point scale; namely, High Achievement, Sound Achievement or Limited Achievement." (p. 12)

    2.17   "That, in the domain of Non–syllabus-based Learning, the QSA develop, and appoint a Delegate to enact, processes and procedures associated with:

- determining whether a learning parcel constitutes Worthwhile Learning;
- validating assessment;
- assigning the number of credit points towards the Threshold Quantum." (p. 12)

    2.18   "That the criteria for Worthwhile Learning be kept open to review." (p. 12)

3: Threshold Quantum

➢ Makes the following Principal Recommendations:

    3.1   "That the criterion of time, on which the award of a Senior Certificate is currently based, be replaced by the criterion of Threshold Quantum of learning." (p. 13)

    3.2   "That the Threshold Quantum for the award of a Senior Certificate recognise both the value of significant learning and the need for the full spectrum of students to have access to the Senior Certificate." (p. 13)

➢ Makes the following Operational Recommendations:

    3.3   "That credit points be assigned to each and every parcel of Worthwhile Learning." (p. 13)

    3.4   That the QSA determine credit points for Syllabus-based Learning and Non-syllabus- based Learning;

- in terms of the four criteria for Worthwhile Learning, worthwhileness (for the Senior Stage); intellectual demand; size of learning parcel; and evidential basis;
- using the number of credit points nominally assigned to a typical Board registered subject as a base value. (p. 13)

    3.5   "That students be assigned the credit points for achievement in a learning parcel only when it is completed and when the achievement level is at, or above, a prescribed minimum." (p. 13)

    3.6   "That this prescribed minimum be, in current terminology, Limited Achievement." (p. 13)

3.7   "That, to be eligible for the award of a Senior Certificate, the Threshold Quantum of learning be:

- Limited Achievement in all three Experiential Learnings;
- the aggregation of credit points equivalent to the total number of credit points assigned to three Board-registered subjects and a QCS grade of E or above." (p. 13)

3.8   "That the Threshold Quantum of learning be kept under review." (p. 13)

3.9   "That the QSA inform students that learning above the Threshold Quantum will be required for many post-Senior destinations." (p. 13)

3.10 "That, twice per year, students receive Statements of Achievement detailing learnings banked and credit aggregated to date." (p. 13)

4: Senior Agreements

➢ Makes the following Principal Recommendations:

4.1   "That, at the commencement of the Senior Stage of Education, each student enter into a formal Senior Agreement with a school about an individual learning plan of action leading to the award of a Senior Certificate." (p. 14)

➢ Makes the following Operational Recommendations:

4.2   "That each Senior Agreement aim to:

- develop mutual understanding of the student's nature and situation, learnings to date, learning goals (targeted and generalised as warranted), and aspirations for the future;
- point students to what they, with others as necessary, must do to obtain up-to-date information to aid decision-making;
- break down longer-term objectives into achievable short-term goals that have explicit timeframes;
- provide the details of how students will satisfy the requirements for the Threshold Quantum of learning for the award of a Senior Certificate;
- detail the support students can expect to be given from schools, other learning providers and the community." (p. 14)

4.3   "That a Senior Agreement indicate a student's proposed entry and exit dates for the Senior Stage of Education." (p. 14)

4.4   "That each Senior Agreement be negotiated by the student and the school, and activated when signed by both parties." (p. 14)

4.5   "That students be prepared for negotiating Senior Agreements through appropriate guidance, counselling and support from the school, its community and, where appropriate, parents/caregivers." (p. 14)

4.6   "That Senior Agreements be reviewed twice per year, and open to amendment (without penalty)." (p. 14)

4.7   "That the QSA:

- provide guidelines for schools and students on how to approach and construct Senior Agreements;
- provide exemplar Senior Agreements;
- establish an electronic database for storing Senior Agreements and their amendments." (p. 14)

5: The Auspices of the School

➢ Makes the following Principal Recommendation:

5.1   "That each student's learning in the Senior Stage of Education be under the auspices of a school." (p. 15)

- Makes the following Operational Recommendations:
  - 5.2 That the school facilitate Worthwhile Learning by: providing learning opportunities; pointing to learning opportunities; and acknowledging learning that is occurring or has already occurred. (p. 15)
  - 5.3 "That the school's responsibility for assessing student learning for recording on the Senior Certificate be:
    - for Syllabus-based Learning, commensurate with the assessment requirements of the various curriculum packages approved by the QSA;
    - for Non-syllabus-based Learning, as one part of the validation process;
    - for Experiential Learning, according to the Area-specific Frameworks provided by the QSA for moderated school-based assessment;
    - for Generic Skills, restricted to the assessment of Foundation Literacy and Foundation Numeracy in those cases identified in statewide, standards-based assessment as requiring further consideration." (p. 15)
  - 5.4 "That the school record relevant results on the QSA's electronic database as they come to hand." (p. 15)
  - 5.5 "That schools agree to provide the QSA with student data in prescribed formats as a condition for the award of Senior Certificates to students." (p. 15)

6: Support Personnel
- Makes the following Principal Recommendations:
  - 6.1 "That mentors be used extensively to support students at risk of not completing Senior." (p. 16)
  - 6.2 "That paraprofessionals be used to allow the teaching profession to focus more intensely on student learning." (p. 16)
- Makes the following Operational Recommendations:
  - 6.3 That the role of the mentor be to: work with one student at a time; share wisdom, knowledge and experience with a student; support and encourage the student; and advocate for the student. (p. 16)
  - 6.4 "That students who, for the purpose of completing the Senior Stage of Education, live away from home, have access to a suitable mentor who can take on an expanded role, as needed." (p. 16)
  - 6.5 "That the role of the teacher focus on the promotion of learning, its assessment and recording." (p. 16)
  - 6.6 "That the role of the paraprofessional be to support the work of teachers and schools." (p. 16)
  - 6.7 "That paraprofessionals be suitably qualified and include para-educators." (p. 16)

7: Three Spheres of Responsibility
- Makes the following Principal Recommendation:
  - 7.1 "That decisions within the system of certification be made within three spheres of responsibility — individual, local and central." (p. 17)
- Makes the following Operational Recommendations:
  - 7.2 That, at the individual level, students take an active role in deciding such things as: the duration of their Senior Stage of Education; the learning to be undertaken; the learning sites; when the learnings will be undertaken; and Senior Agreements. (p. 17)
  - 7.3 That, at the local level, decisions are made about such things as: Fresh Starts; courses of study offered; appropriateness of student learning programs; Senior

Agreements; assessment; support for individual students; and development of supportive peer groups. (p. 17)

7.4   That, at the central level, the QSA make decisions about such things as: criteria for Worthwhile Learning; protocols, procedures and guidelines for satisfactory completion of all four domains of Worthwhile Learning; Threshold Quantum for the award of a Senior Certificate; credit points assigned to learning; quality assurance of local-level assessment decisions; and issues of access and equity. (p. 17)

7.5   "That the QSA design and maintain an interactive Website, providing access to a comprehensive range of career- and job-related information for students and school communities." (p. 17)

7.6   "That schools and/or school clusters develop and maintain complementary, electronic databases providing access to local career- and job-related information." (p. 17)

7.7   "That the QSA design and maintain an electronic Discussion List for exchanges about innovative local initiatives providing Worthwhile Learning." (p. 17)

8: Tertiary Entrance
➤ Makes the following Recommendations:

8.1   That a report be commissioned to design a system of ranking for tertiary entrance that is compatible with the New Deal for certification, giving due recognition to its attributes of inclusivity and flexibility and the results certificated. (p. 18)

8.2   "That, as an interim measure, the present OP calculations be amended to allow for the use of students' individual QCS Test results as one of the minimum five required inputs." (p. 18)

9: Additional Key Recommendations
➤ Makes the following Recommendations:

9.1   "That students sit the version of the QCS Test that immediately precedes their chosen point of time for award of their Senior Certificate." (p. 18)

9.2   "That results presently reported on the Senior Certificate under the category of Recorded subjects be reported under the relevant domain of Worthwhile Learning." (p. 18)

9.3   "That schools move progressively towards being learning centres of their communities." (p. 18)

9.4   "That any implementation strategy developed as a result of the New Deal incorporate whatever current local initiatives promote Worthwhile Learning." (p. 18)

9.5   "That all schools involved in education in the senior stage, and the education authorities to whom they are accountable, continue to provide senior students with learning experiences that reflect, to degrees appropriate to individual learners, the tenets of a general, liberal education." (p. 18)

LEVEL 2: THE NEW DEAL: ITS SUBSTANCE
Towards A Senior Certificate for All
➤ Makes a proposal for a "more inclusive Senior Certificate". (p. 22)

The Senior Years

- Notes that "Senior Years" should not be associated with Years 11-12 per se, "but with the sorts of learnings that students undertake, and for what purposes". Notes that the OECD (2000) refers to two phases: the initial phase characterised by a common curriculum where specialisation has low priority; and the transition phase "encompasses the education that individuals avail themselves of later throughout life, but particularly education that leads to work". (p. 22)
- Notes that the transition phase has two stages: a senior stage and a post-senior stage. States that "The senior stage, by virtue of its position, can be expected to act as a 'halfway house' between the general education of the initial phase and training for work." (p. 22)
- Proposes that "the senior stage be thought of in terms that align with the OECD's phases, as they apply to individual students and their learning purposes, that each individual be deemed to have begun the senior stage when the decision is made, by whomever and for whatever reason(s), that the student's initial education should be terminated or has run its course. In line with this, it is proposed that the senior stage then be deemed to have been completed when the student is awarded a Senior Certificate by the State's certification authority." (p. 22)

The Position

- Highlights the following points regarding the various fundamental premises on which the recommendations of this project are founded as follows:
    - "Reform of senior certification must drive an increase in the proportion of young people who participate in and complete the Senior Stage of Education, especially including those who have disengaged from school-based learning." (p. 23)
    - "Worthwhile Learning should be the overarching and overwhelming driving force in any reform of senior certification that seeks to include all students." (p. 23)
    - "Reform of the Senior Certificate needs to take cognisance of the need to maintain its level of recognition both at home and abroad." (p. 23)
    - This is achieved "by ensuring an appropriate level of reliability in the results of assessment of the learning to be certificated...and by ensuring that the degree of recognition is in harmony with the nature and extent of the learning observed". (p. 23)
    - "For students to be deemed to have completed Senior, they must have aggregated a threshold quantum of achievement (learning) that must take into account quality as well as quantity and will act as a platform for productive future endeavour." (p. 23)
    - "Any such reform of senior education should be founded on the current system of moderated standards-referenced school assessment...as has been developed and administered by the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (QBSSSS) and is to be maintained by its successor, the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA)."
    - "As students progress through their senior years, levels of learning need to move away progressively from being denoted by the years of schooling." (p. 24)
    - "As students progress through their senior years, not all of their learning experiences need be provided by schools." (p. 24)
    - However, "all students undertaking the senior stage of their education would

fall under the auspices of a school that acts as an anchor for all their learning and assessment". (p. 24)

- o "While completion rates have climbed steeply in recent years, the present rate is unlikely to improve substantially without intervention." (p. 24)
- o "Intervention may well need to be accompanied, if not shored up, by changes in community expectations over time". (p. 24)
- o For students to leave equipped to function successfully in the world, support must come from at least three levels: the State, through governments, systems, and statutory authorities; local communities, through schools, industry, local support networks and community organisations; and individuals, through teachers, parents/caregivers, mentors and employers. (p. 24)
- o "Best results are achieved in dealing with adolescent learners when they are included in the decision-making process, be that in planning their individual programs or in negotiating the actual learning itself." (p. 24)
- o "There is a need to reconsider the point of entry into the senior stage." (p. 24)
- o "It is better that students who have become alienated from the schooling process are offered a Fresh Start, rather than undergo a period of remediation in which an attempt is made to re-engage the student with the same sort of learning followed by a return to the schooling routine." (p. 25)
- o "Two conditions relating to interpersonal relationships must be met if alienated students are to be adequately supported...one adult to whom they could relate closely" and conditions related to the peer group. (p. 25)
- o "Any reform of the Senior Certificate should have general application to the whole cohort and constitute a basis for reform of the entire process of certification so that senior certification is for all and marks completion of a stage of education that has integrity in its own right." (p. 25)

➢ States that "The Senior Certificate should embrace and attest to a wide range of Worthwhile Learning", validated here by:

1. "Evidence of Experiential Learning pertaining to Personal Growth & Development, Personal Career Management, Management of Personal Finances": Notes that these three areas were strongly identified in interviews with young people and endorsed by other sectors. Notes that so insistent were the opinions that these "real" areas should be covered that we recommend they be compulsory." (p. 25)
2. "Syllabus-based Learning: Results in subjects or courses of study based on an approved syllabus or planned program of learning" (p. 25)
3. "Evidence of acquired Generic Skills: Suggests that a reinterpretation of the present Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test outcome data, and results on other standards-based, statewide tests could yield for certification a greater number of assessments of generic skills, organised in four categories, two of which would be dedicated to Foundation Literacy and Foundation Numeracy." (p. 26)
4. "Achievements in Non–syllabus-based Learning: Worthwhile Learnings that have occurred in contexts not usually covered but for which there is evidence of learning that can be assessed validly and reliably": Notes that the "range of learnings open to all students" would be thereby extended. (p. 26)

➢ Makes the following further comments:

- o "In attempting to ensure and support a baseline learning package for all students to complete Senior, rigour and quality in the most intellectually demanding areas of the curriculum must not be eroded. Nor should we limit

the opportunity for high achievers to excel." (p. 26)

- o "Any regulation at State or local level should provide ample space for considering students and their plans on a case-by-case basis, so that the intent of any reform of the Senior Certificate is not lost." (p. 26)
- o "The reforms of the Senior Certificate proposed here...look to a more inclusive Senior Certificate that can embrace students who (at least up to now) have been considered atypical or who have had or require atypical experiences." (p. 26)
- o "Any reform of the Senior Certificate should not be prejudiced by considerations relating to the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) whatever its manifestation (e.g. OP)." (p. 26)
- o "Senior certification is for all and marks completion of a stage of education which has integrity in its own right." (p. 26)

The Proposal

- ➢ States that "The key proposal is that the existing criterion of time for completing Senior be replaced with the criterion quantum of learning." (p. 27)
- ➢ Identifies some important implications of this as: the removal of the need for a uniform starting point for the senior stage and that "students are able to plan their own learning journeys". (p. 27)
- ➢ Proposes that the Threshold Quantum for a student to be eligible for the award of a Senior Certificate be all of: achievement in the three compulsory areas of Experiential Learning; and an aggregation of credits – expressed in credit points – equivalent to the total number gained by satisfactorily completing three Board-registered subjects, as currently understood and practised, and by achieving a grade (A to E) on the QCS Test. (p. 27)
- ➢ States that "Allied to this, we recommend that, before the Senior Certificate can be awarded, all students demonstrate learning in Foundation Literacy and Foundation Numeracy." (p. 27)
- ➢ States that "Another key proposal is that, when a student commences the Senior Stage of Education, a Senior Agreement is signed between the student and the school responsible, to mark this commencement and serve as a clearly thought-out plan (open to amendment) of the directions that the student's learning is to take." (p. 28)
- ➢ Notes that "this approach is in accord with the premise based on our finding that 'Best results are achieved in dealing with adolescent learners when the young person is included in the decision-making process'." (p. 29)
- ➢ Discusses the implementation of Fresh Start for disengaged students.
- ➢ Proposes that "mentors and paraprofessionals be involved extensively to support those students at risk of not completing their Senior." (p. 29)
- ➢ Discusses mentoring, certification and what comes under the umbrella of Worthwhile Learning. States that "Over time, and with experience, the Authority should find itself recognising a wider range of learnings." (p. 29)

Threshold Quantum: Worthwhile Learning for the Senior Certificate

- ➢ Identifies two issues as "the nature of Worthwhile Learning that contributes to a Senior Certificate, and the Threshold Quantum of such learnings that must be completed for a Senior Certificate to be awarded". (p. 30)
- ➢ Articulates these issues in more detail in terms of four categories as follows:
    1. Evidence of "Experiential Learning" pertaining to: Personal Growth and Development; Personal Career Management; and Management of Personal

Finances. (p. 31)
2. "Results in subjects or courses of study based on an approved syllabus or planned program of learning. Examples include present Board subjects, Study Area Specifications, approved VET training packages, School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships." (p. 31)
3. Evidence of acquired generic skills. (p. 32)
4. Achievements in Non–syllabus-based Learning, i.e. Worthwhile Learning that has occurred in contexts not covered by the usual curriculum planning but for which evidence exists, and that can be assessed validly and reliably. (p. 33)

The "Machinery": The Proposed Role of the Queensland Studies Authority
- ➢ States that "The Queensland system of moderated, standards-referenced school assessment and cross-curriculum testing...serves the students of this State well and is highly respected on the international stage." (p. 34)
- ➢ Proposes that "This system also offers an excellent opportunity for further expansion to accommodate the extra dimensions of learning proposed above." (p. 35)
- ➢ Suggests development of moderation procedures that are variants of the standard one for non-standard contexts.
- ➢ Discusses the implications for the TER and notes the following:
  - o Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER): "in Queensland, rank order information comes in the form of a profile, an Overall Position (OP) and up to five Field Positions (FPs).
  - o The OPs determination involves scaling, combining, ranking and banding, with the information used to calculate OPs (and FPs) coming from two sources: first and foremost, teacher assessment of student achievement in Board subjects; second, group scores on the QCS Test (which, for this purpose, acts as a scaling test).
  - o "More and more students who have just completed Senior are finding their way (with others) into tertiary courses though alternative routes that employ a variety of entry criteria. It is reasonable to assume that this trend will continue, possibly even to the extent that somewhere down the track the TER can be eliminated." (p. 37)
  - o "Any reform of the tertiary entrance system would need to be the subject of a report in its own right...[that] would involve examining the scope for replacing the present exclusive system, where results in only one category of learning (i.e. the Board subjects in Syllabus-based Learning) are eligible for inclusion in the OP calculation, with a system that is designed to be inclusive." (p. 37)

LEVEL 3: POSITION PAPERS
The Senior Stage of Education
- ➢ Notes that "This paper discusses the Senior Stage of Education, what we consider to be a first stage in the transition phase and one which, by virtue of its position, acts as a halfway house between the earlier compulsory curriculum and intensive training/specialised education."
- ➢ Proposes more flexible structural arrangements for the senior stage "to ensure that more students are able to take up their entitlement to a full, senior education." (p. 44)

Transitions
- ➢ Discusses transitions in school life and notes that "the practice has been for students to move through these transitions as a single age cohort, with the nature of the

education that they experience being grounded in what is considered suitable for typical students at each age". (p. 44)

➢ Notes that individual students who become disengaged do not want to stay in school when they no longer have to and states that "This project focuses on how this watershed period is affecting the lives of students who, at around age 15, are making decisions about their education that will affect their life chances, and on what ways senior certification can be changed so that more young people will make active decisions to keep learning rather than to retreat from it." (p. 45)

➢ Discusses early disengagement from learning and failure to complete Senior Certificate. Identifies three issues of immediate concern to this project that in themselves may be significant reasons for non-completion as:
  o "the nature of the transition from junior to senior schooling
  o the present two, consecutive full-time years of senior schooling
  o the institutional setting of senior schooling." (p. 45)

➢ States that "Like all other States in Australia, Queensland currently has a "one-size-fits-all" structure for secondary education. That is, the transition between Junior and Senior is fixed for all students at the end of Year 10...this phase is often viewed as a movement from one milestone of a pre-ordained pathway to the next." Notes that this works well only for about 50 percent of students. (p. 45)

➢ Notes that in recent years a "pathways" metaphor has been used "to convey how an educational structure once built around limited choice is becoming a phase of education designed to accommodate different choices. However, students at risk of not completing ought not be locked into pathways that pre-ordain post-Senior destinations…In essence, we see that there is a need to extend such notions based on students' exercising active and responsible choice." (p. 46)

Our Proposed Senior Stage of Education
➢ Details the characteristics of a senior stage alternative to the current one which has been based on "one size fits all".

➢ Notes that this proposed Senior Stage of Education is characterised by five principles and describes them as follows:
  1. Flexible entry and exit points: "We propose that most students embark on their senior studies as proposed in their Senior Agreement within what is currently Year 10. There are various reasons for this proposal...Young people who have been identified as disengaged from schooling ought to be allowed to begin their Senior earlier…Flexibility demands that students are also able to begin their Senior Stage of Education at a later date." (p. 47)
  2. Variable rates of progression: "Our survey of over 2000 junior and senior students suggests that, for most students, variable rates of progression are an attractive option, provided the age by which they finish senior education, in general, remains about the same…Our research…quite clearly suggests that it is those who currently leave school early who have the greatest need to be able to vary their progression through Senior. We have concluded, unequivocally, that a significant reason for this group of students' non-completion is the present "two-full-time-consecutive-years" institutional setting." (p. 48)
  3. Flexibility and diversity in curriculum offerings: "Broadening of the learning sites that students will be able to access in their studies. These would include schools, communities, workplaces, training institutions, tertiary institutions, or combinations of them...The concept of flexibility and diversity in learning in the Senior Stage of Education must extend to both the curriculum and where

that curriculum can be accessed." (p. 48)
4. Students exercising choice.
5. Individualised commitments to learning: "Each learner must take responsibility for his or her own learning." (p. 49)

Worthwhile Learning
➢ Notes that "new judgments need to be made about what learning is to be valued, and how much of this is to be reported on the Senior Certificate." (p. 52)
➢ Outlines five antecedents to new judgments about learning as follows:
1. The OECD understandings about the relationship between individuals' education and their later lives.
2. The QSE 2010 statement of the purpose of schooling, with its explicit reference to personal development within a community context.
3. The concept of lifelong learning.
4. That all students "take up their education entitlements in full" and "that education in the Smart State be purposeful, relevant, of the highest intellectual standards, technologically up to date, and flexible enough to accommodate a broad range of learning outcomes." (p. 52)
5. The present system of senior education in Queensland which is a system of school-based assessment which empowers teachers to determine the detail of the delivered curriculum (within a framework endorsed by a central authority) and to assess student achievement. (p. 52)
➢ Argues that the challenge is to increase the amount of learning being undertaken by an increased number of students.
➢ States that "this project invokes the concept of Worthwhile Learning – the learning that can be credited towards the award of a Senior Certificate."
➢ Proposes the following criteria to determine the eligibility of a "learning parcel" (and a student's achievement in it) to be admitted as Worthwhile Learning, and to evaluate the number of credit points eligible learning would contribute: worthwhileness (its value for the Senior Stage of Education); size; intellectual demand; and evidential basis (of achievement, including consideration of validation processes).
➢ Proposes the following four domains of worthwhile learning for the Senior Certificate:
1. Syllabus-based Learning;
2. Generic Skills;
3. Experiential Learning; and
4. Non-syllabus-based Learning.

Minimum Requirements and Threshold Quantum
➢ Argues for set of minimum requirements that maintain the value of the certificate without acting as barriers to participation. (p. 68)
➢ Notes that the minimum requirement for the issue of a Queensland Senior Certificate has been the completion of Year 12 in a participating school. (p. 68)
➢ States that "The proposals of the New Deal for the Senior Certificate recommend changes that will support increased participation in senior studies with quality certification." (p. 69)
➢ Notes that a key proposal in the New Deal is that "rather than having students satisfy an attendance requirement in order to be eligible for a Senior Certificate, they must have achieved a Threshold Quantum of Worthwhile Learning." Explains the rationale for this under the keywords Inclusivity and Flexibility. (p. 69)

➢ Discusses the Proposed Threshold Quantum in terms of the proposed minimum requirements (quantity and quality), judgments about the Threshold Quantum and the make-up of the Threshold Quantum.

➢ Proposes that the Threshold Quantum for a student to be eligible for the award of a Senior Certificate be: achievement in the three compulsory areas of Experiential Learning; and an aggregation of credit – expressed in credit points – equivalent to the total number gained by satisfactorily completing three Board-registered subjects, as currently understood and practised, and by achieving an E grade or better on the QCS Test. Also recommends that students demonstrate learning in Foundation Literacy and Foundation Numeracy.

Senior Agreements

➢ Notes a requirement for "individual students to become involved in more comprehensive planning of their learnings and career pathways". (p. 76)

➢ Overviews the specifics of the agreements and implications relating to implementation, procedures and protocols.

Auspices of the School

➢ Notes that this section discusses the organisational questions of "how learning is to be facilitated, coordinated, monitored, assessed and recorded. In particular, we lay out where the responsibility for each of these functions would lie." (p. 84)

➢ Proposes that schools facilitate, coordinate, monitor and record assessment in all Worthwhile Learning. (p. 84)

➢ Discusses why schools are best placed to coordinate and facilitate diverse learning activities, the meaning of enrolment and the roles of the school.

➢ States that in summary, "we have presented an argument for all learning in the Senior Stage of Education to come under the auspices of the school. This is both practical and desirable if the learning for all students in the senior stage is to be about education as well as training...It will monitor that learning, partake in the assessment of that learning directly or by validating the work of another assessor, harvest the assessment of that learning and transmit it in suitable format to the statutory authority for banking." (pp. 87-88)

Students and Mentors: Teachers and Paraprofessionals

➢ Redefines the nature and role of the teacher as a "learning manager" and discusses the implications of the new Senior Certificate for teachers. (p. 90)

➢ Discusses the role of the mentor as "an experienced person from the community with local knowledge, expertise and standing, who is able to pass on that knowledge to a young person beginning to engage with the world beyond immediate family and friends." (p. 91)

➢ Identifies three roles for a mentor as sharing acquired wisdom, support and encouragement and advocacy and proposes that non-teaching mentors "be used extensively in schools". (p. 92)

➢ Considers the incorporation of "paraprofessionals and volunteers into the learning process" and proposes that "more paraprofessionals be used more effectively in more schools to free up teachers' time for those other aspects of our other proposals that might require teachers to become engaged in new, more flexible, areas of learning." (p. 94)

The Three Spheres of Responsibility

➤ Notes three spheres where decision making takes place: the central, the local, and the individual and that "the decisions made in each of these spheres are crucial to the education experienced by each student." (p. 98)

➤ In terms of the central sphere states that "broad decisions are made about policy, the curriculum, assessment principles, certification procedures, resourcing and implementation strategies. Clearly, it is at this level that the New Deal is to be formally established, and from within this sphere that Senior Certificates and tertiary entrance rankings will continue to be issued." (p. 98)

➤ Discusses responsibilities in the areas of curriculum, assessment and moderation, data management and issuing certificates.

➤ In terms of the local sphere notes that "Under the New Deal, local decision-making responsibilities would be greatly extended" and "All schools would be encouraged and empowered to introduce initiatives in areas currently being explored by just a few." (p. 100)

➤ In terms of the individual sphere notes that "there are three main areas of decision making that would be offered to (and indeed, required from) students under the New Deal". These include: setting and revising individual goals through Senior Agreements; identification, collection and presentation of evidence of Worthwhile Learning; and completion of the senior stage. (pp. 101-103)

➤ Notes that decisions made in one sphere can lead on directly to another.

Tertiary Entrance

➤ Recommends significant changes to senior certification in Queensland that, if adopted, will require adjustments to the present ranking process (OPs and FPs).

LEVEL 4: RESEARCH REPORTS

➤ Presents details of the following seven case studies:

1. Gold Coast: Notes that "In this case study we will focus on the overwhelming need to provide alternatives to the traditional classroom-based, two-year senior program for students at risk on the Gold Coast." (p. 126)
2. Townsville.
3. Mount Isa and Doomadgee: Notes that this involved the areas of indigenous education and education in rural and remote areas being brought together, using four learning sites.
4. Mackay.
5. Kingston Centre for Continuing Education: Notes that "The centre provides opportunities for young people who have disengaged from schooling to re-engage in a formal education program." (p. 158)
6. Central Coast of New South Wales: Notes that this is "a case study of the mentoring programs and support networks for young people currently underway on the central coast of New South Wales, in and around Gosford." (p. 166)
7. Northern Corridor Education Precinct.

➤ Discusses the focus groups and the Surveys of Queensland's Junior and Senior Students.

LEVEL 5: APPENDICES

➤ Includes the historical context, a list of associated literature, snapshots of various sites and a detailed paper considering debates in the educational assessment literature.