

Guideline for syllabus writers: assessment techniques and conditions in Authority subjects

QSA senior syllabuses include information on assessment techniques to guide teachers in regard to:

- the selection of assessment techniques for a particular subject
- the use of each technique (i.e. Is the technique “fit for purpose”? Does the technique allow students to demonstrate what they know and can do for the range of standards?)
- the suitable dimensions that can be assessed using the technique
- the conditions associated with implementing assessment techniques
- the moderation requirements, especially verification and exit folio requirements
- advice about drafting
- advice about authentication of student work.

This guideline provides information to guide the development or revision of assessment techniques in syllabuses for Authority subjects. It should be read in conjunction with the P–12 Assessment Policy available from the QSA website <www.qsa.qld.edu.au> P–12 approach > Student assessment > Assessment policy.

Purpose

The guideline is a base from which syllabus writers develop the assessment advice in syllabuses. The guideline is to assist syllabus writers to:

- critically examine assessment techniques in current syllabuses, especially in regard to the purpose of the assessment technique
- provide a consistent format for assessment technique and condition advice in syllabuses
- establish comparable word length and time requirements across syllabuses.

Audience

This guideline provides information for syllabus writers, Learning Area Reference Committees and the P–12 Curriculum Committee regarding some common assessment techniques identified in syllabuses for Authority subjects. It includes information about word lengths, time requirements and conditions for these assessment techniques.

Scope

This guideline applies to syllabuses for Authority subjects excluding Extension syllabuses and syllabuses for external examinations.

The guideline does not apply to study area specifications (Authority-registered subjects).

The guideline applies to syllabuses in development and revision from March 2010.

Word lengths, time requirements and conditions for some common assessment techniques

The assessment techniques in the syllabuses for Authority subjects are described or labelled differently yet have similar qualities and characteristics.

This guideline describes four assessment techniques grouped according to their purpose:

- supervised written
- research
- extended response
- performance and product.

These assessment techniques do not include all assessment techniques currently used in the syllabuses; for example, creative/imaginative writing in English.

The guideline does not preclude syllabus writers from including other assessment techniques that match the specific requirements for a particular subject or from expanding upon the advice in the guideline to strengthen subject specific requirements.

For techniques that include spoken or multi-modal presentations, the time requirements have been calculated to be comparable to the time it would take to deliver the number of words suggested for written techniques. The time requirements for multi-modal presentations are greater as these include more than one mode.

If syllabus writers include other assessment techniques or change the conditions described in this guideline they must provide advice to the relevant Learning Area Reference Committee, the P–12 Curriculum Committee and the Assessment, Moderation and Certification Committee outlining the rationale for the changes.

If the change or changes are approved by the P–12 Curriculum Committee and the Assessment, Moderation and Certification Committee, the Manager, Senior Curriculum Policy must amend the guideline.

Supervised written

The supervised written assessment technique is used under conditions that require student responses that are produced independently, under supervision and in a set timeframe. There is no question of student authorship. The conditions for the assessment must be explained on the assessment instrument.

A supervised written assessment instrument could be constructed using one or more items. The items might:

- ask a question
- call for a response to stimulus materials. When stimulus materials are used they should be succinct enough to allow students sufficient time to engage with them. If the stimulus materials are lengthy, complex or large in number they may need to be shared with students prior to the administration of the assessment instrument.

Questions and stimulus materials may be seen or unseen. Unseen refers to materials and questions that students have not seen prior to the administration of the assessment instrument. Unseen materials or questions should not be copied from information or texts that students have previously been exposed to or have directly used in class. Schools must ensure that there remains no question about student authorship when previously seen questions or materials are used.

Supervised written assessment instruments may include:

- extended written response such as an essay
 - generally analytical exposition requiring sustained analysis, synthesis and evaluation to fully answer a problem, question or hypothesis
 - in response to a question, statement and supplied sources/stimuli (seen or unseen)
 - if an extended piece of writing is chosen, it is best if it is the only item, as this will better allow students to demonstrate the full range of standards.
- short responses where students are required to write in full sentences, constructing a response that may have one or several paragraphs so that ideas are maintained, developed, justified
- short responses requiring practical exercises and calculations where students are required to construct, use, interpret or analyse primary or secondary data, graphs, tables or diagrams; and/or to apply algorithms or demonstrate mathematical calculations and problem solving and which may include paragraph responses
- multiple choice, single word, true/false, or sentence answers useful for assessing content knowledge
- difficult-to-construct questions that will elicit meaningful high-order cognitive responses.

Guidelines for supervised written:

For Year 11	For Year 12
<p>Recommended time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1–1½ hours • perusal time may be added as required. <p>Word lengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short responses for example, stimuli/questions unseen: 50–250 words (word count does not include diagrams and workings) • extended written response, seen or unseen question: 400–600 words. <p>Conditions must be clearly outlined on the assessment, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open book or notes allowed • questions seen or unseen • word processor or calculator permitted. 	<p>Recommended time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1½–2 hours • perusal time may be added as required. <p>Word lengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short responses for example, stimuli/questions unseen: 50–250 words (word count does not include diagrams and workings) • extended written response, seen or unseen question: 600–800 words. <p>Conditions must be clearly outlined on the assessment, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open book or notes allowed • questions seen or unseen • word processor or calculator permitted.

Research

Research assessment techniques assess the research abilities of students and the outcomes of the application of that research. These techniques are based on research practices including locating and using information that goes beyond the data students have been given and the knowledge they currently have. Research assessment techniques may include:

- the generation of primary data such as extended experimental investigations in science
- the use of secondary data such as written research tasks in Modern History.

The research process is iterative. It is based on the exploration of a problem, question, issue, design challenge or hypothesis (the research purpose). Most research assessment instruments follow an inquiry approach and include:

- establishment of a research purpose
- generation and/or collection of primary and/or secondary data/information
- independent collection of information/data from a variety of sources
- sorting and analysis of data or information including examining and evaluating validity, reliability and relevance of data or information
- synthesis of data/information
- development of research conclusions, recommendations, actions, solutions (the research outcomes) with justifications.

A research assessment instrument may be presented in a variety of modes including:

- *Analytical exposition* such as essay, magazine article, paper, research assignment. Students provide a response to a specific question or issue. The response may be supported by references or, where appropriate, with tables of data, diagrams and flowcharts. The response could be a persuasive argument or informative text.
- *A report* such as a research report, experimental investigation, project. In a report, the student makes a decision regarding the question, hypothesis or issue under investigation and supports the decision with logical argument. The report may be in response to observations made and conclusions drawn from various sources, including case study or studies or experimental outcomes. A report will normally be presented with section headings. It will often include tables, graphs or diagrams and the analysis of statistical data.
- *Folio or journal* that is a “purposeful” collection of work that helps to define a student’s efforts and achievements in a specified area. The folio can be used to document a variety of information, ideas and working processes. It should contain decisions made and reasons or justifications for these decisions (e.g. in a training journal, justifications are based on data for program modifications). Evidence of research, including the collection and sorting of data, must be included.
- *Product design research* where students design and/or make an artefact. Supporting documentation for the production of a product that outlines the research processes and explains the choices made in the product creation are required.
- *Other*, such as action research, which is used to decide upon a course of action or a strategy.

Regardless of the mode of presentation, research conventions (e.g. referencing) must be adhered to. These assessment instruments are implemented over time and used in class and often in a student's own time.

Guidelines for research:

For Year 11	For Year 12
<p>Written:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 800–1000 words (word count includes data analysis, discussion and research outcomes/recommendations) <p>Spoken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3–4 minutes <p>Multi-modal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3–5 minutes 	<p>Written:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1000–1500 words (word count includes data analysis, discussion and research outcomes/recommendations) <p>Spoken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4–5 minutes <p>Multi-modal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5–7 minutes

Extended responses

Extended response techniques assess the sustained application of higher order cognition (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) to known and provided materials, stimuli and concepts.

These techniques involve proposing a solution or solving a problem, expressing and justifying a point of view, explaining and evaluating an issue or the application of concepts or theories to a circumstance. These techniques do not focus on research.

An extended written response, known also as analytical exposition may be presented in a variety of modes including:

- essay
- magazine feature article
- editorial
- paper
- critique
- review
- persuasive essay
- argumentative essay.

Extended responses may also be presented as spoken or multi-modal responses. Multi-modal refers to any presentation that includes significant contribution from more than one mode. The focus for assessment decisions is the spoken or multi-modal response; however, supporting documentation will be required to substantiate decisions and for monitoring, verification and exit purposes. The instruments used will require students to present to a real audience (e.g. speech), or a virtual audience through the use of technology. Spoken and multi-modal responses include:

- interview
- seminars
- speech
- PowerPoint presentations
- video.

Students respond to these assessment instruments over time using class and their own time.

Guidelines for extended responses:

For Year 11	For Year 12
Written: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 600–1000 words Spoken: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3–4 minutes Multi-modal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3–5 minutes	Written: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 800–1200 words Spoken: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4–5 minutes Multi-modal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5–7 minutes

Performance and product

Performance and product techniques assess a physical demonstration or the development and making of a tangible artefact.

A performance or product is based on the application of skills, theory and conceptual understandings.

Students are required to analyse, synthesise and evaluate data and/or information in the development of a performance or product. The assessment will often involve the creative input of students and the application of technical skill in solving a problem or providing a solution. It may also include written or oral explanations of choices, intentions or strategies.

- A performance requires the student to do something. The focus is often the student performing through the psycho-motor domain and with an audience. Performances are observed on a number of occasions throughout a unit of work. Judgments about the quality of performance can be made as an iterative process throughout the unit or as the culmination of the unit of work.

Possible types of performances include:

- physical activity performances in, for example, physical education
- creative performances in areas such as dance, drama, music, performance art.
- A product is the outcomes or culminating artefact of a unit of work (e.g. a meal in Home Economics). It requires the student to make something using skills learnt in the course of study. The development of the product is observed throughout the unit of work. Possible types of products include:
 - food items and meals
 - textile products (e.g. clothing, craft)
 - machine
 - technical drawing
 - artwork
 - furniture
 - prototypes.

Performance and product assessment instruments are administered over time and used in class and often in a student's own time.

The requirements and conditions for monitoring and verification, including advice for teachers and students, will be specific to the subject. **However, the requirements and conditions must be comparable to those outlined in the other common assessment techniques.**