



EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms LM Linard MP (Chair)
Mr BM Saunders MP
Mrs SM Wilson MP (via teleconference)
Mr N Dametto MP
Mr MP Healy MP (via teleconference)
Mr JJ McDonald MP

Staff present:

Ms E Jameson (Acting Committee Secretary)
Ms A Beem (Assistant Committee Secretary)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY ADMISSION RANK SYSTEM

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 16 March 2020

Brisbane

MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2020

The committee met at 10.30 am.

CHAIR: I now declare open the public briefing of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee on the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank system. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. My name is Leanne Linard. I am the chair of the committee and the member for Nudgee. The other members here today are: Mr Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Bruce Saunders, member for Maryborough; and Mr Nick Dametto, member for Hinchinbrook. Joining us via teleconference are Mr Michael Healy, member for Cairns, and Mrs Simone Wilson, member for Pumicestone.

The purpose of this public briefing is to hear from representatives of the Department of Education, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre about Queensland's transition to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank system.

These proceedings are similar to parliament and are subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. In this regard, I do not have to remind members of the public as they are not here presently, but I will advise that proceedings will be recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliament's website. I ask that we all check our phones are switched to silent, as I just did. The program for today has been published on the committee's web page and there are hard copies available from our committee staff as well.

DEVITT, Ms Michelle, Chief Analytics and Technical Officer, Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre

GRIFFITHS, Dr John, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre

JONES, Mr Claude, Director, Assessment, Reporting and ICT Systems Division, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

ROSENGRAVE, Ms Robyn, Executive Director, Curriculum Teaching and Learning, State Schools Division, Department of Education

WILTON, Ms Jacqueline, Director, Curriculum Services Division, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

CHAIR: Good morning to our panel members. Thank you for coming in this morning. We are looking forward to getting an update on how the process has been going. I know there have been exhaustive briefings to bring everyone along on the journey, but I invite each organisation to provide a statement update about what has been happening and then we will open for questions. I invite the Department of Education to start.

Ms Rosengrave: Thank you, Chair and members, for the opportunity to appear before you. In my role as executive director of the state schools division for the Department of Education, I have the great opportunity of working really closely with our state schools and also with our colleagues from QCAA and QTAC. Much of what the department does is influenced by the great work of these two organisations. What I thought we might do, Chair, is hear from my colleagues from the two organisations whose primary work is around the implementation of this system. Then if there are other matters around how we are implementing within state schools I will add to that, given the work that they are doing. Is everyone happy with that?

CHAIR: Absolutely.

Ms Wilton: Claude and I will share the opening statement. I will hand to him in due course. Before I begin, I seek leave to table some documents. I have an infographic that tries to present some of the implementation journey to date. As teachers, we like infographics. They are useful. I will talk to some of the aspects of that in the opening statement.

You would be aware that the new Queensland Certificate of Education system, the new QCE, has been evolving and working quite actively towards implementation over the last five years. We have been in a process of redeveloping nearly 116 senior syllabuses for implementation with year 11 students last year and, for the first time, with year 12 students this year. Those syllabuses have been redeveloped to ensure that young Queenslanders in the 21st century have the skills to be entrepreneurs, innovators, lifelong learners and responsible global citizens. All of those features have been part of that redevelopment.

The important part of the redevelopment process has been its very public and consultative nature. At a minimum, every syllabus was staged for three lots of public consultation. Very importantly, it gave Queensland teachers the opportunity to input into the process of redevelopment. In all instances, we have used the senior secondary Australian Curriculum or Australian Curriculum as the basis for redevelopment, so it has been a very important aspect of bringing us in line with the rest of the country. In doing that redevelopment, we have also ensured that we have reviewed really high performing jurisdictions around the world. We have looked at Hong Kong, Singapore and British Columbia to ensure that what we in Queensland do is the very best it can be in supporting our learners.

All of our syllabuses embed 21st century skills—critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, personal/social capabilities and the like. The other important aspect to be aware of with respect to the redevelopment—you will notice that the infographic refers to this as well—is that ahead of implementation we have provided teachers with over a thousand unique resources to support them in that implementation. That is quite a different approach than has been taken historically, where resources come after the fact. We have provided them ahead of time.

One of the other really important aspects of the implementation has been the rollout of professional learning for Queensland teachers. Over 56,000 Queensland teachers have participated in a range of professional learning events associated with our new Queensland Certificate of Education system. That has included face-to-face professional development. The government invested \$20 million in that exercise. That has been a particularly critical aspect of ensuring that teachers are well trained and ready to deliver the new curriculum. We have also ensured—that is what that map guides you on—that we have supported teachers right across the state. Most recently my officers were in Longreach, Emerald, Roma and Tagai, ensuring that teachers are well supported in rural and remote settings.

The QCAA has also developed an accreditation program for teachers, ensuring that teachers are well versed in the qualities and attributes of a high-quality piece of assessment. That has been a staged package of online learning. You can see under 'Accreditation' in the infographic that over 22,000 teachers have completed at least one of the accreditation courses. Those courses are staged. You do one, then two, then three and so forth. You can see that we have teachers progressively working their way through all of those courses at present.

Probably the critical thing to understand about our new QCE is how it balances the role of internal assessment—that is, assessment teachers devise locally in their school to speak to the unique and local needs of their community. What a teacher would be doing up in Townsville, where I grew up, would be quite different to what they might be doing in the Lockyer Valley. School devised assessments allow teachers to create assessments that are bespoke and unique to their context, but in Queensland we have a system that then marries that school devised assessment with an external assessment. That is an assessment that we write at the QCAA and the schools administer. Probably the biggest difference in the assessment regime, whilst we have had internal and external sitting side by side, is that the new assessment system only requires students to complete three internal assessments and one external assessment. It is an emphasis on quality over quantity. Year 12 students this year will complete significantly less assessment than their peers have in years gone by.

Importantly, the new quality assurance processes for those internal assessments are also very rigorous. We endorse every assessment prior to it being administered with students. A teacher devises the assessment and sends it into the Authority. We review it and ensure that it is appropriate to be administered. We then also check the comparability of student results—a process called confirmation. After the assessment has been administered the schools send in a sample of their student work for it to be checked by the Authority as well. Every Queensland school has now submitted all of their internal assessments for endorsement—over 27,000 assessments—and the QCAA has reviewed and endorsed all 27,000 of them as appropriate for administration. From this Friday, we will also have the first internal assessment results into the QCAA. They are due in this week. Essentially, that will be the start of the process of schools getting in their results for confirmation. That might be a good time for me to pause and invite my colleague to provide his remarks.

Mr Jones: Thank you for the invitation to present to you this morning. Jacqui has spoken about the redevelopment of syllabuses and the two new quality assurance processes: endorsement and confirmation. I would like to talk to you about the external assessment piece. As you would be aware, we will have our first lot of external assessments at the end of this year. It is the first time we have done that for many decades in terms of subject based external assessment. These assessments will run over a 17-day period, from 26 October to 17 November. In the last week and a half we have provided the external assessment schedule to schools. That will become publicly available on 30 March on our external website.

To give you an understanding of the logistics around coming up with an external assessment timetable, we have about 53,000 students completing year 12 at the moment. They are doing a range of subjects from the 46 general subjects that we offer. Believe it or not, there are over 13,000 different subject combinations that students study in Queensland. To come up with an external assessment schedule for the whole state is fairly complex. It took a bit of time, but we have got our first timetable built and, as I said, it will be published publicly on 30 March.

To help prepare students, parents and schools with the first lot of external assessments, we have built two full, complete samples of external assessments for every one of those subjects. We made one available to schools in July last year and one has been available to the public on our public website so people can see what an external assessment looks like in Queensland and provide them with an opportunity to help students prepare for those external assessments in 2020. Those two sets of assessments have been available since July last year. On 19 December this year students will receive their results online. They will be able to log in on 19 December and get their subject scores online for this year's work. Those students who want a printed copy can ask for one and we will get them a printed version of their statements and certificates.

To support the new senior system, we have also redeveloped our ICT systems to support the new processes going forward. We have built a system for endorsement, for confirmation—the accreditation pieces that Jacqui talked about—and for syllabuses. This allows our teachers across the state to be able to access our system, to interact with us, to look at information and provide us with information and so on through that online platform. You can see on the infographic that we now have over 37,000 portal users who access our system on a regular basis.

On top of that, it is important that we have a strong communication strategy with our various stakeholders so we have built a whole range of fact sheets, brochures, videos, online professional development guides and resources and newsletters to support our stakeholders in the implementation of the new system. We have also had a whole range of other things. For students we have created a new MyQCE website and we have created a social media presence to interact with our students.

We do a range of things to support our schools in the implementation of the new system. One that we have been doing for the last 5½ years is twice yearly face-to-face presentations with school leaders and principals across the state. We are actually in the middle of those at the moment for 2020. We have done the statewide syllabus workshops that Jacqui talked about for teachers across the state. Our executive team also goes and visits schools as they request visits, and we do work with their leadership teams to support them in their implementations and talk about their issues and the things they are working through as part of the new system.

Our learning area managers have been travelling the state working with heads of department and faculties. The maths learning area manager will meet with the maths head of department—the same for science, English and so on—to support heads of department across the state. Jacqui talked about the rural and remote sessions that we have been running, but we also run briefings for our key stakeholders, including the principals associations, the parent associations, teacher unions and the tertiary sector. We do a whole range of other activities to support our stakeholders as well.

The last thing I want to talk about is on the infographic on the far right-hand side. We did a survey with our school leaders and principals in November last year. Over 800 people responded to that survey. As you can see from that, that group has indicated over 95 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the QCAA's communication and assistance to schools in implementing the new QCE system. You can see their own satisfaction in terms of their readiness to implement the new QCE system as well.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Dr Griffiths: Thank you, Chair and committee members. I want to cover off the ATAR as part of the new system. It is a part of not the ATAR system as sometimes it is referred to. The Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank is a mechanism used nationally for tertiary admissions. I need to stress it is a percentile rank and not a mark and indicates a student's position relative to other students in any

given year. For example, an ATAR of 80 does not mean the student got 80 per cent; it just indicates the student was placed in the top 20 per cent of the students in their year 12 cohort in that particular year. It is expressed on a 2,000-point scale from 99.95 down to zero and steps of 0.05. There is no pass or fail for the ATAR and it is intended to be used as a measure of tertiary entrance only.

The ATAR will be issued to Queensland year 12 students for the first time in December this year, replacing the Overall Position. In that regard it brings Queensland into line with other states in the use of the ATAR. QTAC will be the organisation responsible for calculating the ATAR on behalf of the Queensland universities. I need to stress that the advice that we give students now and we give going forward is that they should choose the subjects that they enjoy, that they are good at and that they are likely to meet the prerequisites for for what they would like to get into rather than picking subjects that they think will necessarily scale well. It is not a good recipe. In that regard, that advice is the same advice that we give around the OP now and previously.

The methodology for the calculation of the ATAR has benefited from QCAA and interstate knowledge and experience and has resulted in a robust methodology that recognises Queensland-centric issues. For example, Queensland's approach recognises the importance of VET. To be eligible for an ATAR in Queensland, students must complete five eligible subjects or inputs. That can be five general subjects at units 3 or 4 or four general subjects at units 3 and 4 and one applied subject or completed AQF certificate at level 3, 4 or diploma or an advanced diploma. Students also need to pass a general or applied English subject with a letter grade of C or better, and they are allowed to accumulate their results over five years, recognising that not all students do complete the ATAR in a single year.

In terms of the calculation, QCAA provides QTAC with the school based results from students and VET results. We then will undertake a scaling process. Intersubject scaling allows for results to be compared equitably across different subjects and compared fairly. The scaling quantifies the difficulty of achieving a predictable result in a particular subject. Then we take each of the five best subjects, so if a student has completed more than five subjects we take their best five scaled results, and that forms the basis of their overall rank based on merit. Then they are allocated to 2,000 ATAR bands according to a participation model, consistent with other states. It is important to note that this is not a linear model. It considers both the population of both ATAR eligible and ineligible students. More places on the higher ATAR bands are reserved for ATAR eligible students and, as such, we can expect to see more students obtaining ATARs at 30 or above rather than 30 and below. QTAC has developed the ATAR calculation process over the last two years with input and consultation from Queensland and interstate experts. A technical document has been developed and published on a website which describes the Queensland scaling process and the algorithms in detail. The document has been peer reviewed by interstate experts and independently peer reviewed as well.

Finally, an ATAR technical committee on scaling will provide ongoing advice to QTAC. That includes members from interstate organisations and from the university sector. QTAC is working closely with the QCAA and universities to prepare for the implementation of the ATAR and, as it has been stated, the ATAR results will be released on 19 December—along with the school based results at the same time and date, to make sure that there are no gaps in students receiving results. They receive their results from school and ATAR at the same time. We will communicate students' ATARs through a purpose-built ATAR portal which will become available for students to register in August 2020. If students cannot access that portal or cannot access the electronic release we will work with students on an individual basis to make sure they are not disadvantaged.

We have a number of information sheets and fact sheets on our website. I will not go through all of those in detail. Suffice it to say, there has been a large amount of communication that has been developed over the last 18 months. We have set up a dedicated email address and inquiry line to respond to inquiries that we expect from August 2020. We are undertaking a range of consultation, through both the school sector and the university sector up and down the state—in fact, we have been doing that in the past and we will be doing a lot more of that going forward and that will continue over the next few months, notwithstanding travelling restrictions which might kick in.

I want to assure the committee that QTAC is on track to deliver the ATAR in December 2020 for the cohort of students who are proceeding through the system now. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you all for your opening statements. We will pass now to the committee to ask questions. Just before we do, can I seek the committee's approval to table this document. Is someone happy to move that?

Mr McDONALD: I move.

CHAIR: The deputy chair just moved. All those for? Against? That is carried. We will publish that online. I am sure it is available already but we will include on it the web page because it is a lovely ready reckoner.

Mr McDONALD: Thank you, everyone, for your presentation this morning. I have a good insight into this new system. I am interested in the external testing. What does that look like? You mentioned two sample external assessments. Would it be useful to the committee to have a look at those sample assessments to understand what the kids actually go through?

Mr Jones: Yes, certainly. The sample assessments represent what an external assessment will look like in each of those subjects at the end of this year. We have built those assessments as if we were building the real assessments for 2020 in terms of making sure they have covered the appropriate topics in the syllabus, met the objectives, covered the assessment technique and conditions and so on. All our assessments at the end of the year are pen-and-paper written exams. They look very similar to what a pen-and-paper written exam will look like in their internal assessment 1, 2 and 3 if they have an exam in each of those. The external exams are two-hour papers plus planning and perusal time, for the subjects that the assessments are 25 per cent. For our maths/science subjects that are worth 50 per cent, there are two 90-minute papers that students sit plus the planning and perusal that goes along with that. We are in the process of finalising those external assessments for 2020 and we have a range of those already approved. We have our contractors in place ready to start printing and distributing those for the end of the year. The processes in place to get those ready for 2020 are well underway and on track.

Mr McDONALD: In terms of those tests—I am almost exhausted just thinking about what you said—there is that aspect and then there are also other school tests.

Mr Jones: Yes. That is an important point to make. As Jacqui mentioned before, we have reduced the amount of assessment that students will sit in units 3 and 4. There are four pieces of assessment that students will sit, three of those being school based assessments. We have talked about the quality assurance processes with those. For most students and most subjects the school based assessment contributes 75 per cent of their final result. The external assessment will then contribute the other 25 per cent of that. In maths/science subjects it is 50 per cent through the three internals and 50 per cent through the external.

The other important point to note in terms of the calculation of a subject result is that we are, because we do so much in the quality assurance of the three internal assessments, simply combining the results from the three internals with the results of the external to get a score out of 100. In pretty much every other jurisdiction in the country there is a scaling mechanism that takes place that uses the external assessment to scale internal assessment results before a subject result is provided to students. In respect of what we are doing, we put a lot of effort into the internal assessment and the school is putting a lot of effort into the internal assessment. The external is just another piece of assessment that combines with the three internal assessments to provide a subject result for students.

Mr SAUNDERS: First of all, I would like to congratulate you. I have been following this very closely. What a wonderful job you have done. It is great talking to the parents of students this year. They are pretty happy and the principals are happy, so well done and thank you very much for the effort and the time that not only you but also the other officials have put into this transition. It has not been easy. You have had to not only bring the students along but also bring the parents along for this journey. What ATAR scores will be given to students not intending to attend a tertiary institution? What happens to them?

Dr Griffiths: All students eligible for an ATAR will be awarded an ATAR. They can use that to apply for a tertiary place. If they do not use it to apply for a tertiary place in the first year out of school it can be used at some further point.

Mr DAMETTO: I appreciate everybody coming along this morning. Thank you for your briefing. It has added a little bit of clarity around some of the questions that I had previously asked as a parent. My son actually finished high school two years ago, so he missed out on all of this—and so did I and my wife. Talking to other parents who were a little bit worried about it all, I am glad we missed out on it, but listening to the feedback that we have had so far the transition has been good. Congratulations to both groups.

There are a lot of students out there who will use their ATAR to go on to a tertiary education but also there will be students out there who, from their ATAR, will be trying to find a job. In the past employers have understood what an OP meant and what the scaling of an OP meant. What work is being done to educate employers and people who are not associated with tertiary education about what the ATAR means for those potential employees?

Ms Wilton: There are probably two parts to that question. I might take the first part in terms of year 12 certification. Obviously post year 12 students may choose to engage with further study or may choose to enter the workforce or something even more exotic like travelling the world perhaps, if they are allowed. When a student finishes year 12, they receive their Queensland Certificate of Education. The system is the Queensland Certificate of Education in the same way as in New South Wales we talk about the HSC, the Higher School Certificate. Our system is the QCE. It is the QCE that is the artefact that documents what a student knows and can do after 12 years of schooling. That includes a variety of learning. It could include general subjects that could also be used to contribute towards an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank if you are on a pathway to further study, but it can also include achievement in what we call Applied subjects. Applied subjects tend to have a greater applied nature to them—hence the name—and be more focused on practical orientation and vocational orientation.

The QCE also formally recognises vocational education and training. We have nearly half of all Queensland students undertaking VET studies in years 11 and 12, and the QCE recognises all of that learning, including other learning that young people do—community based learning, music studies, dance studies. The breadth and richness of that is extremely broad. We work on ensuring there is a good understanding of the Queensland Certificate of Education as the artefact that documents what a young person can do after 12 years of schooling. If they happen to have an ATAR after that, that would be where my colleague John comes into it.

Dr Griffiths: I think Jacqueline has probably answered it because it is about the QCE, which recognises the VET study that they may or may not have done at school. Very much the ATAR is for entry into university, and that is its sole purpose. We are not trying to say that it demonstrates something other than that.

Mr DAMETTO: Okay. The reason I ask is just looking at some of the trades out there. For example, someone who was looking to put on an electrician in the past would say that if they have a pretty good OP score they are probably going to be all right to go through and do the electrical and the instrumentation side of things or the diagnostic side of things. It was sort of a benchmark, even though it was not being used for a tertiary prerequisite. It was still good for employers to understand that when looking for people who have gone through the system, but thank you very much for your answer.

Ms Rosengrave: From a school perspective in response to that, one of the things that we are ensuring is happening at the school level is broadening our understanding of what the QCE provides for our young people. With industry and with community, particularly from that community perspective, we are working very hard through our schools to educate community about what the QCE is going to provide around that level of information. If an industry comes, particularly in our smaller communities, and says that it is looking for a young person who might be able to be an apprentice or a trainee with them, we can say to them, 'Here is what the information in the QCE provides us,' to help them make that decision. It gives a much broader scope of understanding of what our young people are taking from their 13 years of schooling, not just a single result.

Mr DAMETTO: That is where I was heading with that. Thank you very much for that, Robyn. I appreciate it.

CHAIR: John, I think you have a significant challenge if you think you can overcome this sense, as I think we have always had, that an OP, like an ATAR, does not mean more. It has become this almost meaningful way to size up someone's whole senior schooling with that score and people have seemingly understood it. I appreciate and agree with you that it is a score to get into university, but even my experience has been when you are in university it is not that your GPA necessarily becomes that meaningful a measure that employers use. The OP still seems to be what people talk about when they are trying to put people in particular boxes, so that is a challenge for you. Good luck with that one, but I appreciate the message.

It seems to me, having gone through the OP system, that the ATARs are far more refined and may assist universities that may have a large cohort in a particular, say, OP1 or high-demand course to be able to choose which students come in. I certainly appreciate that when I went to do my first degree they said, 'Just because you have the OP cut-off does not mean you will all get in because we may not have enough places for you.' Is that right? What has the feedback been from universities in respect of the transition? Does it matter to them? Do they mind? Is it better?

Dr Griffiths: They certainly mind. Approximately 700 or 750 kids were getting an OP1 previously, so the OP1 cut-off cuts off at about 98.8 per cent through to 99.5 per cent, so there are a lot of students in that band. Previously for high-demand courses—for example, medicine, dentistry—

we have had to seek the information from the QCAA, which has calculated an ATAR in the background for interstate students, to allow universities to differentiate those OP1 students. Historically, there have been disappointed students who thought because they got an OP1 therefore every course was available to them.

We are moving from a 25-point scale, and I think that is one of the strengths of moving to an ATAR. It becomes very transparent. There are 2,000 points, and probably to get into a certain course it might be cutting off in the mid-99s where previously you thought you got an OP1. I think the universities are well aware of having what we term a second order of merit outside the OP1. It will become very transparent, which I think is good for students and for parents so they completely understand that just because you get an OP1 or an OP2—whatever the OP—it is not going to get you into that high-demand course.

CHAIR: Taking from that, has the feedback from universities been that this will be of assistance?

Dr Griffiths: Yes. It will definitely be of assistance to the universities. As I say, they have had to use a measure of an ATAR for a lot of courses previously. It just makes us very transparent.

CHAIR: Jacqueline, I am really interested in your review of the senior syllabus. Certainly before going through the OP system we were advised—and I take your advice too, John, about doing things you enjoy, but students were certainly chosen who are academic—to do heavily weighted subjects to try and get the best result coming out. Can you talk a little bit about that now? Are all subjects equal at the end of the day? I appreciate what you are saying in that the best five will be taken forward towards the calculation of the ATAR, but can you talk a little bit about that?

Ms Wilton: Yes, I can. The one advantage of doing the new system in the way that we have is for the first time ever we rewrote every syllabus at exactly the same time. Once again, the historical process was that it was on a yearly rotating basis, so you could have syllabuses that had been rewritten one year but they were sitting alongside one that was rewritten 10 years ago, so the age and stage of them was quite varied. Everything was rewritten at exactly the same time. The great advantage in doing that is that it allowed you to set a baseline around the syllabus objectives and particularly around what we call the cognitions. Every syllabus has a common approach to cognitions, which are the thinking skills that we expect young people to be able to gain through a course of study. Rather than it being about just the maths or the chemistry or the physics, it is about how you analyse, interrogate, justify and critique—those are the cognitive skills—so everything has exactly the same cognitive basis from which it has been developed, and of course there will be different subject nuances there as well.

I think the other big advantage that we have had in redeveloping everything at once is being able to really interrogate whether the curriculum we have been offering is contemporary and responsive to student needs, not just for today but when young people are moving on to further study or to work in two, three, five or 10 years time. To that end, we have totally revised our curriculum offerings. There are 48 general and general extension subjects that are offered across Queensland. Five of those are brand-new and have never been offered in Queensland before—that is, Literature, Design, Business, Food and Nutrition, and the one that I think has a lot of excitement around it as well is Psychology. It has been exceptionally popular.

CHAIR: Love it!

Ms Wilton: It has been a very popular offering and has been taken up at quite an astounding rate. Even from last year to this year, we have had an increase of 1,200 students across the state picking Psychology. It speaks to the enthusiasm with which young people have embraced that curriculum offering. All of the curriculum is baselined off the same framework. What students will then receive, as we have said before, is their subject result out of 100. Irrespective of whether they are doing English, Literature, Chemistry, Physics or Maths methods, everybody gets a result out of 100. We pass that result to QTAC and at that point QTAC engages in a process of intersubject scaling where we need to—

CHAIR: Which is on your website.

Ms Wilton: That is very comprehensively unpacked on the QTAC website. If you are looking for a light read, you can engage with that document and understand how all of that works.

CHAIR: I will not ask you to explain the algorithms used there, John.

Dr Griffiths: No. My maths was good until I started to read that.

CHAIR: I have a question relating again to the syllabus. You made the comment that it has been reviewed and you have reviewed some of those high-performing jurisdictions. What were your key learnings from that review for our system?

Ms Wilton: Thank you for the question. It is actually an excellent question. If you give me the opportunity to talk about curriculum, I will probably be here for the rest of the day.

CHAIR: I like curriculum. Is everyone okay with that? If so, we can stay!

Ms Wilton: I think the big learning has been around that 21st century skills focus. It is increasingly important that young people are not just able to recall and comprehend factual information but they have a foundation of skills that allows them to converse with colleagues in a room, that allows them to respond in a social and ethically aware way, that they have ICT skills, that they have the ability to critically consider what they are being told and to evaluate the efficacy of sources and resources. What we saw was that that type of approach is very much being adopted around the world and it was a big driver for what we did in Queensland—that is, to ensure that our syllabuses provided young people in Queensland with those same foundation skills and opportunities, because they are going to be the skills that set young people apart in the years to come. You can google most things these days. It is not about factual recall; it is about that level of interrogation, analysis, critique, evaluation and being able to say, 'Is this a valid position and what are the arguments on either side?' They are the sorts of skills that those cognitions I talked about before strongly focus on.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Mr McDONALD: I know Queensland is the last jurisdiction to implement the system. Can you provide some background as to why that is?

Ms Rosengrave: This system?

Mr McDONALD: Yes.

Ms Rosengrave: We are not the last to implement this. This is a system that has been 40 years in the making and, through the work that QCAA and QTAC have been doing, we have just implemented the system over the last two years with our cohorts of students. Last year we had our year 11s commence and we then taught out the existing system that we had. We have a very long history of having a strong school based assessment system that has been highly regarded. This was a change that came through from a review that was undertaken in 2014. A review was undertaken of the system that we had here in Queensland. As a consequence of that, a new system was developed with implementation commencing last year with our year 11s.

From a national perspective, we have all been implementing senior syllabuses in our own ways. Our colleagues in southern states have had an external system for a very long time. Through the review of the system that was undertaken we recognised the strengths that we did have from our internal system. As a consequence of that, we have maintained the three internal assessments that make up our final result. We have also then taken on board the value of having the external assessment that comes through at the end. For us in Queensland it is recognising the strengths of the system that we have had and then bringing in the new elements of that going forward.

CHAIR: As there are no further questions and no matters taken on notice, I thank you all again for coming and briefing and updating us and clearly for the extraordinary amount of work that you have all done with this new system. Thank you also for the tabled document and for directing us to additional resources that are available online. Those who may read the transcript or be watching the briefing can also access all of that information, so thank you. I now declare this public briefing closed.

The committee adjourned at 11.13 am.