

SACE FIRST YEAR EVALUATION FINAL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

1. The SACE Board maintain its commitment to a continuing improvement program for the SACE and, in so doing, encourage maximum involvement of schools and teachers in determining the improvement priorities and strategies; the main aim being to take advantage of the detailed experience of all schools and teachers as they continue to implement the SACE.
2. The SACE Board continue to monitor national, interstate and international developments in senior secondary education and certification (particularly the developing Australian Curriculum) and continue to assess the structure of the SACE to ensure that it remains a certificate of national and international standing.
3. In relation to the Personal Learning Plan (PLP), the SACE Board note the relatively minor comment received by this evaluation suggesting that the changes introduced after the first year of experience have been reasonably well received. Further, that as part of its continuing improvement agenda, the SACE Board, in conjunction with schools, identifies and promotes through various professional development initiatives, emerging good practice in the application of PLP outcomes for students as they progress through Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the SACE.
4. The SACE Board clarify for all schools that Stage 1 transferring interstate students and international students enrolling part way through Stage 1 need not undertake the PLP and reconsider whether the PLP should remain as a mandatory requirement for any international student.
5. In relation to literacy and numeracy, the SACE Board continue to pursue and enhance its rigorous approach to assessment of the Stage 1 student learning based on performance standards and, in conjunction with schools, monitor student subject choice in literacy and numeracy at Stage 2 with a view to:
 - 5.1. identifying any undesirable trends in subject choices as early as possible and, if such trends emerge
 - 5.2. examining whether there are aspects within the SACE Board's control (such as the nature of assessment tasks required or perceived areas of misalignment between school based assessment tasks and external assessment tasks) which are continuing a trend which commenced earlier than 2011 of reduced Stage 2 student selections in English subjects and in Specialist Mathematics.

RESEARCH PROJECT

6. In relation to the Research Project, the SACE Board note the wide range of opinions expressed to this evaluation ranging from high levels of support to substantial criticism. Assuming the current policy position of the Research Project being a compulsory Stage 2 subject remains unchanged, the Panel recommends that the SACE Board's continuing improvement efforts concentrate on:
 - 6.1. ensuring that teachers assigned to teaching the Research Project have access to sufficient materials to enable them to teach research skills to students and to supervise Research Projects with confidence

- 6.2. assisting schools to identify, in conjunction with students, the essential components of a sound research project topic without diminishing each student's capacity to choose a topic of interest to them
- 6.3. understanding whether there are unintended barriers to the greater adoption of Research Project A and taking steps to lower or remove them
- 6.4. using experience to date to identify examples of students being able to meet the requirements of the Research Project successfully by taking further a directed investigation in another subject and promoting such examples to schools generally
- 6.5. using experience to date to identify examples of students from non English speaking backgrounds, new arrivals and Aboriginal students undertaking soundly based research projects with innovative and relevant topic selection and innovative teacher support and promoting such examples to schools generally.
- 6.6. researching the reasons for the stark difference between the performance of male students and female students in the first year and discussing with schools ways and means by which this may be addressed in future
- 6.7. helping schools and students, through the provision of guidelines based on experience, to deal with the undesirable potential for a student to apply more effort to the Research Project than intended for a 10 credit subject
- 6.8. continuing to be vigilant to ensure that work submitted is that of the student and that any outside assistance is acknowledged.
- 6.9. In addition, the Panel recommends that, in conjunction with schools, the SACE Board staff develop a program of good practice seminars in which learnings of the type envisaged above as well as the work of those schools which have used the Research Project to reconsider their overall approach to senior secondary education can be discussed more widely with peers.
- 6.10. Further, should the SACE Board wish to reconsider the current policy position, the Panel recommends that it gives specific consideration to the Research Project remaining as a mandatory requirement but with an option that it be studied as a Stage 1 subject or a Stage 2 subject.

This consideration would need to:

- 6.10.1. take account of the potential impact on the SACE Board's computer systems in determining an implementation time-table
 - 6.10.2. include the determination of strategies to encourage those students who elect to study the Research Project as a Stage 1 subject to study five full year Stage 2 subjects
 - 6.10.3. acknowledge that students who elect to study the Research Project as a Stage 1 subject will not be able to have its results contribute to their ATAR calculations.
7. The SACE Board note the early trends in subject selection and, in conjunction with education authorities, continue to monitor the trends in subject selection at both Stage 1 and Stage 2. Further, with the emerging Australian Curriculum in mind, the Panel recommends that the authorities consider and address the possible difficulties in the availability of skilled senior secondary teachers in subjects for which a reversal of the early trend in subject choices may occur in future.

ASSESSMENT MODEL

8. In light of the importance of assessment and consistent with the objective of ensuring a rigorous approach whilst valuing teacher judgement, that the SACE Board assign high priority in its continuing improvement program to the area of assessment and in particular:
 - 8.1. note the difficulty which a number of teachers in a number of subject areas are having with the new approach to assessment
 - 8.2. use the first year experience of practising teachers to take steps to simplify the statements of performance standards and associated criteria
 - 8.3. in association with teacher associations and using the first year experience of practising teachers, provide professional development opportunities in assessment task design
 - 8.4. extend the reach and content of clarifying forums so that they are more accessible to all teachers and include a component of assessment task design and other aspects requested by teachers
 - 8.5. continue to compile a more complete set of annotated exemplars of student work at each grade (alongside the related assessment task) with an emphasis on exemplars that are at the borderline between the five grades (and also between A and A+ grade levels)
 - 8.6. in conjunction with practising teachers, continue to refine the expectations regarding the number and nature of assessment tasks for each subject with a view to requiring potentially less assessment tasks and a greater degree of subject specific flexibility
 - 8.7. consider whether teacher assessment and moderation outcomes would be strengthened through the use of marks to complement the use of grades
 - 8.8. reconsider whether the teacher assessment and moderation outcomes would be strengthened by enabling teachers, either through marks or other form, to indicate the teacher's assessment of the relative position of each student in samples of work submitted for moderation
 - 8.9. closely monitor the relativity between external assessment results and internal assessment results to ensure that all assessment tasks are based on the same performance standards and criteria
 - 8.10. consider whether the use of school assessment marks would contribute to the improvements in the calculations of the ATAR
 - 8.11. investigate whether there are any aspects of the assessment arrangements for particular subjects that provide an unintended advantage to female students even when the SACE is 'bedded down'
 - 8.12. consider whether there should be a return to some form of statistical moderation of school assessments in those subjects or subject components where it would be appropriate to do so
 - 8.13. continue the initiative of providing more detail in Chief Assessors' reports
 - 8.14. authorise SACE Board staff and moderators to provide expanded and direct (i.e. including face to face) feedback to each teacher whose internal assessment has been moderated by more than one grade and/or where the key determinant in the moderation outcome being different from the teacher's assessment has been the assessment task design

- 8.15. authorise SACE Board staff and moderators to assist teacher associations to prepare materials to assist in the continuing development of teacher understanding and skills.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

9. The SACE Board note the considerable effort that SACE Board staff have applied to the development of an initial program of improvement. Further, the Panel supports the thrust of the program and recommends that the practice of annual review of the results cycle be continued and that the SACE Board makes its improvement agenda widely known in seminars, forums and by other less personal ways such as via the website, direct emails to schools, teachers and professional associations, newsletters etc.
 - 9.1. Where identified initiatives including IT initiatives are competing for limited resources, the Panel recommends that higher priority be assigned to those which will impact positively on teacher and SACE Board staff time and workload.
 - 9.2. Further, the learning from the first year evaluation is that alongside the Board's improvement agenda should sit a comprehensive change management and communications plan which aims to ensure that all schools and teachers are kept as up to date as possible on the progress of the various initiatives.
 - 9.3. The Panel also recommends that added to the SACE Board's list be a consideration of the potential for introducing on-screen marking of external assessments and separating the electronic release of SACE results from the paper documents.
10. The SACE Board note the Panel's early assessment of the areas of possible intended and unintended consequence as well as the areas of unfulfilled aspirations with a view to:
 - 10.1. reinforcing in publicity about the SACE the positive effects that the SACE has stimulated
 - 10.2. monitoring whether any of the possible unintended consequences and unfulfilled aspirations become a longer term trend and, in conjunction with schools and practising teachers taking steps to offset or eliminate them.
11. Further to earlier recommendations dealing with the commitment to a continuing improvement program, including the monitoring of possible unintended consequences and unfulfilled aspirations, the Panel recommends that the SACE Board, by the end of 2014, commission separate external research into the longer term impacts of such matters as:
 - 11.1. readiness of SACE completers for further study and the workplace
 - 11.2. changing practices in schools and
 - 11.3. variability in SACE enrolment and completion rates between groups of identified and traditionally disadvantaged students, particularly Aboriginal students.
 - 11.4. In this regard, the Panel suggests that the research effort, as well as the effort involved in satisfying ad hoc requests for data would be aided considerably if SACE Board staff had access to a modern data warehouse.