

SETTING EXAMINERS AND CRITICS HANDBOOK

All Setting Examiners and Critics employed by the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification MUST follow the instructions in this handbook



OFFICE OF TASMANIAN
ASSESSMENT, STANDARDS
& CERTIFICATION

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SECTION I – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following people will be appointed to assist with drafting and developing the written external examination paper.

- Setting Examiner(s)
- Critics

Each member has a specific role to play and is responsible to TASC for the performance of those duties. The appointment of each of the above roles is for one year and will be appointed on a yearly basis. As per TASC policy, only people not currently teaching the course in the same year can fill these roles (i.e. ideally a person with a minimum of five (5) years teaching experience in the subject, but not teaching the subject during the year of employment with TASC).

ROLES

Setting Examiner

The duties of the Setting Examiner are to:

- develop an examination paper in accordance with the current course content, the guidelines for external assessment and any other guidelines provided by TASC.
- develop the correlating marking guide/ assessment matrix / marking rubric or tool for the external assessment developed.
- meet with the critics to review the first draft of the paper in accordance with TASC procedures.
- determine what changes will be made to the paper in light of the comments received from the critics (from both the meeting and also from the second drafts).
- proof read the final draft of the paper.
- check a copy of the final copy of the examination paper after printing.
- advise of any specific stationery requirements or other materials that will need to be provided to students for the examination (e.g. graph paper, maps).

Solutions and/or a marking guide **MUST** be provided for all subjects prior to final exam paper being approved. It is expected that this process will be completed by August of each year.

Critics

In order to be sure that assessment tasks are correctly prepared, TASC undertakes a series of checks. The most significant of these involves the use of critics to appraise the external assessment tasks.

At least two critics will be appointed per course.

The duties of the critics are to:

- review the first draft of the exam paper with any written comments and relevant information documented in the pro-forma booklet provided.
- meet with the Setting Examiner(s) to discuss the first draft of the paper.
- provide solutions to questions on the exam paper in the first draft, to be updated throughout with changes, and undertake the draft examination paper noting the time taken to produce acceptable answers.
- provide Setting Examiner(s) with suggestions for improvement. Critics need be specific about any concerns they may have. If necessary, critics can suggest alternative questions for consideration by the Setting Examiner(s).
- proofread the 2nd draft of the paper and any changes to assessment matrices/answer keys ready for the final submission for Executive Officer approval.

Solutions and/or a marking guide **MUST** be provided for all subjects prior to final exam paper being approved.

SECTION 2 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

TASC employs a large number of people to assist with the administration of its external assessment program. These people may have privileged access to information relating to assessment practices and procedures, assessment instruments such as exam papers, or to results whether it be on an individual, school or state-wide basis. All information belongs to TASC and must be treated as confidential.

Public comments about assessment practices, procedures and results can only be made by the Executive Officer of TASC or his/her nominee.

TASC must be advised of any conflict of interest, potential or otherwise, which may arise due to involvement in any part of the external assessment process. Therefore all setters and critics must sign and submit the declaration form found on TASC website under [employment requirements for sessional staff](#).

RISK OF EXAM INTEGRITY

TASC currently requests exam setters to complete one exam for the year of development. Any compromise to the integrity of the exam during development or once developed adds risks to the reliability of a TASC external assessment, the ability for TASC to complete its mission, and in producing a fair scoring system to thousands of student results. For these reasons, we consider extremely tight security measures around the production, distribution and management of the exams and the marking guides /assessment tool/matrix produced.

COPYING STUDENT EXTERNALLY ASSESSED MATERIAL(S)

Please note that under no **circumstances** can examiners either retain **or** make copies of student's external assessment material. TASC is the only body authorised to do so, and only with the student's formal permission.

EXAM PAPERS

All information gained from the setting process must remain strictly confidential. Under no circumstances should the exam paper be discussed or information divulged to anyone not directly involved in the process. The exam paper can only be discussed with staff from the Assessment Team at TASC, the Setting Examiner(s) and Critics.

Working drafts of the exam paper or individual questions being prepared or perused by Setting Examiners and Critics must be kept under tight security at all times and must not be identified as a part of an examination. No person can retain copies of examination papers or questions which have been considered at any stage during the setting process unless specifically authorised by TASC.

Those involved in the setting process must take all reasonable steps to ensure the security of information, both during the preparation and critiquing of the paper and when sending information to TASC.

Those involved in the setting process are expected to be circumspect about their involvement with the exam.

SECTION 3 – SPECIFIC EXAMINATION PAPER INFORMATION

EXAMINATION PAPER PROCESS

The setting of examination papers will occur in the following sequence.

- Call for Expression of Interest for Setting Examiners
- Calling for Expressions of Interest for Marking Coordinators(s)
- Appointment of Setting Examiner(s) – calling for expressions of interest where necessary
- Appointment of Critics – calling for expressions of interest where necessary
- Setter delivers draft of exam to TASC.
- TASC delivers the exam to the critic team (minimum of two critics plus the Setting Examiner) with the first review draft booklet “Critique of Examination Paper – 1st draft of exam paper” to be completed prior to the meeting for submission with the reviewed first draft. It is expected the first draft will be returned to TASC within two weeks.
- It is expected that the critic will work through the exam and attempt to answer the questions (answer key not provided to the critic if made at this point in time – allows critic to prepare own answers for the meeting and test against Setters expectations).
- A critic’s meeting is held. This will be organised through invitation from a TASC External Assessment Logistics Officer which will include an attached agenda. The Critics and the Setter then meet at TASC or via TASC (Skype), with an External Assessment Logistics Officer from TASC. The agenda for the critics meetings will include the following:
 - Review and incorporate the critic’s feedback of the exam using the draft papers returned to TASC and cross-checking with “critique of Examination Paper” booklet. Original electronic copy of the exam will be updated throughout the critics meeting as required;
 - Review any provided solutions/marketing guides/etc. that are also developed at this point in time - TASC reveals the SE’s answers and the critics check for discrepancies of the exam. (IF not provided, this process needs to be done at a later stage but before end May 2019).
- It is expected that throughout the critics meeting the following processes are implemented:
 - Review the comments for the Setting Examiner from the previous years “Feedback to Setting Examiners” and ensure they have been implemented.
 - Review the External Assessment Specifications (EAS) on the TASC website to ensure that each part of the exam addresses each specification appropriately.
 - Review the marks associated to each question/exam part to ensure it relates adequately to the level of difficulty/complexity required (weighted appropriately).
 - Review the capacity for the exam to allow students with varying achievement levels (SA/HA) to demonstrate capacity.
 - Check that there is the correct amount of space/paper required for the answers.
 - Check the estimated times required to complete the exam are compatible with the expectations of the drafted exam.
 - Provide an estimation of the min/max time taken to mark each part of the exam (this information will be useful for the employment of the markers for the current year).

- Check that the graphics/pictures/images in the exam are readable and legible for the students and alter where required (note that *none* of the exams are printed in coloured ink).
- Other checks including spelling/grammar and formatting are already included in the Critic's review document.
- The second draft is then securely delivered to the Critics team for a final review with marking guide/tool/answer key (must be attached at this point in time), preferably completed and printed for the critics to take with them. The "Critique of Examination Paper – 2nd Draft" is attached to the updated exam and answer key/matrix/markings guide for the critics.
- The Critics submit the review of the examination paper and answer key etc. to TASC within two weeks.
- Changes are made under the guidance of the Setting Examiner via SKYPE or face to face at TASC once all second drafts are returned. Only the Setting Examiner has the capacity to accept or reject suggestions made within the critic's responses in the "critique booklet".
- On completion of all changes, the final copy is printed and reviewed by the SE for submission to the Executive Officer with the marking guide etc. If final draft is complete via SKYPE, TASC then sends out updated draft of the exam and answers to the SE.

This is a continuous quality improvement cycle and our main intention for 2019 is to provide clearer timelines and expectations to improve the overall process.

KEY DATES

- Original templates to TASC by May 3
- Draft One to Critics within two weeks from receipt of original paper, at latest by 17 May
- Two week turn around, i.e. draft 1 to be returned to TASC by 31 May
- Critics Meeting – between 31 May – 28 June
- Draft Two should be printed and provided to critics team and setters at the time of Critics meeting
- Draft Two with answer key/markings matrix/guide to be returned to TASC within two weeks of receipt – approximately 12 July but latest of 26 July
- Final approval from setting examiner within the next two weeks for papers to be reviewed by the Executive Officer no later than 9 August.
- First print draft to printers by 23 August
- Finished products by 6 September for print approval

A GUIDE TO WRITING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Assessment occurs through gathering evidence with a set of **assessment instruments**. Assessment instruments include such devices as supervised examinations, tests, assignments, projects, practical, orals, aural, observational schedules and portfolios.

Each assessment instrument comprises one or more **assessment items**. An assessment item requires a response from students in one or more of a variety of modes such as multiple choice, short answer, paragraph, extended written response, oral, graphical, practical demonstration or completion of a computer-based task.

As well as the knowledge and skills that are the direct focus, assessment items draw on assumed knowledge and often make use of background material contextualising the task presented. Cues and the layout of assessment items provide guides to students about the requirements of the task set by the item.

PRINCIPLES

Each assessment **item** assesses on face value what it purports to assess, using clear, unambiguous criteria.

Each assessment **instrument** is used under clear, definite and specified conditions that are substantially the same for all students/participants and do not present an inappropriate barrier to equal participation by all. Each **set of assessment instruments** used to determine results provides a range and balance of background contexts, types of instruments and modes of response.

The **assessing body** ensures that assessment is based on relevant and authentic evidence that accurately reflects the knowledge and skills of students and is not distorted by malpractice of any kind. Students with **specific needs** are assessed in a manner that removes barriers to the equal opportunity to participate, is fair to all students and ensures the validity of results.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN SETTING EXAMINATION PAPERS AND/OR QUESTIONS

- If using stimulus material the questions must relate to that stimulus material.
- Use of quotations - if using a quote ask questions that require the student to do something with it - rather than just as a distractor.
- Ensure all questions being asked are within the content of the course and assess the externally assessed criterion. Each item being assessed must be able to be mapped back to the course.
- No question assumes knowledge or skills not covered in the course.
- Ensure an even balance of questions against each criterion being assessed.
- The exam paper questions avoid using references to actual given names where possible, to minimise confusion. E.g. Jane bought 7 apples at... This also applies to business names in papers. For example Zip Fitness is too close to Zap Fitness.
- Questions are to have as few options as possible.
- Ensure that items are not just restatements of topics (word for word) from course document - therefore does not require the student to make some choices about what is relevant – just repeat what you know.
- The use of the word evaluate: definition of questions must be clearer - 'evaluate' often appears in the sense of 'describe' rather than 'judge something against some criteria'.
- Comprehension passages must only use 2 voices at most. One female and one male.
- Review the External Assessment Specifications (EAS) to ensure that each part of the exam addresses the approved External Assessment Specifications on TASC website.
- Allocate the marks associated to each question/exam part to ensure it relates adequately to the level of difficulty/complexity required (weighted appropriately).
- Ensure there is enough scope in the exam to allow students with varying achievement levels (SA/HA) to demonstrate capacity.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT ITEMS

- Written questions/instructions requiring a written response
- Oral questions/instructions requiring an oral response
- Oral questions/instructions requiring a written response
- Written instructions requiring the making of a product
- Written instructions requiring performance of an activity.

This guideline is specifically about written questions requiring written responses as used for TCE external exams:

- Essay or extended response
- Multiple choice questions
- Short answer questions
- Restricted response questions such as True/False
- Questions/instructions requiring problem solving or diagrams/graphs.

GUIDELINES

(a) Assessment instruments (e.g. an exam paper)

1. Work within the framework provided. This may be the course document, the sample exam paper, course assessment guidelines.
2. The assessment instrument, while not going outside the requirements of the course document, must assess a reasonable sample of content and cover the particular assessment criteria. Each item of the assessment instrument must be able to be mapped back to the course document.
3. The assessment instrument must reflect the balance between the various sections of the course.
4. Ensure there is range of items in terms of the types and size of response they require – from closed items that seek a single correct response through items where there are multiple correct responses, to items for which there are many different unique appropriate responses.
5. For tests that have a time limit, the length of the test must be such that nearly all students can demonstrate what they know and can do within the time allowed.
6. Grouping like items allows students to respond to all items requiring a common mind- set at one time.
7. While it is acceptable to get ideas from other sources, no single other test or source should significantly influence the instrument.
8. Restrict the number of optional items as having a large number of optional short response or essay items reduces reliability. Large numbers of optional items means that different students have not taken the same test as such items are not essentially interchangeable, testing exactly the same thing.

(b) Assessment items (e.g. each individual question/task)

1. Try to identify and eliminate language, symbols, words, phrases and content that are generally regarded as offensive by members of racial, ethnic, gender or other groups, except when judged essential for adequate representation of the content. Also avoid stimulus material that could reasonably be seen as offensive because of sexual or obscene content.
2. Avoid the use of colloquial terms which may not be familiar to all students.
3. In tests where the level of linguistic or reading ability is not part of what is being tested, the linguistic or reading demands of each item should be kept to the minimum necessary for the valid assessment of the intended content.
4. Give students clear and definite instructions. The instructions should contain sufficient detail so that students have a fair opportunity to respond to a task in the manner that the item developer intended.
5. Present the assessment item as clearly as possible through appropriate choice of layout, cues, visual design, format and choice of words.
6. Develop items that are inclusive of students' diverse backgrounds, e.g. when constructing case study

material. As much as possible avoid gender and cultural - specific material and if it needs to be used, avoid stereotyping unless doing so creates an unnecessary distraction.

7. Make the tasks as authentic as possible by setting items in as realistic context as possible that is familiar to candidates. However, do not use significantly emotional events that may be trigger strong negative reactions from some students taking the assessment such as a tsunami or car accidents.
8. Stimulus material must have the effect of clarifying the task and not act as a distractor.
9. Stimulus material should not include colour or graphics unless essential to what is being assessed. Graphics will normally be presented in the grey scale.
10. Instructions to students should clearly indicate how to make responses – writing, diagrams, dot points etc. Instructions should also be given in the use of any equipment likely to be unfamiliar to test takers.
11. Indicate for each item a point value or weight or an estimated time limit for answering. Clearly separate item parts and indicate their value.
12. Match the type of test item to the learning objective/s and criteria being assessed, *Name and categorise ...* - restricted response such as matching; *Describe and analyse* - extended response essay.
13. Ask questions (particularly short-answer) to which experts could agree there are responses which are better than others.
14. For problem solving items, state whether the student must show his/her analysis and work procedures for full or part marks.
15. Use as background material and assumed general knowledge only what students can be reasonably presumed to have had ready access to.
16. For each item develop a marking guide to communicate to markers the required essential features of the student response.
17. Check that there is the correct amount of space/paper required for the answers.
18. Check the estimated times required to complete the exam are compatible with the expectations of the drafted exam.
19. Provide an estimation of the min/max time taken to mark each part of the exam (this information will be useful for the employment of the markers for the current year).
20. Check that the graphics/pictures/images in the exam are readable and legible for the students and alter where required (note that none of the exams are printed in coloured ink)
21. Ensure there is capacity in the exam to allow students with varying achievement levels (SA/HA) to demonstrate capacity.
22. Other checks including spelling/grammar and formatting are correct.

SECTION 4 – PAYMENTS

The Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC) utilises the payroll functions carried out by the Department of Education. The Department is responsible for all payroll and expense related payments. TASC must first approve all claims before payment can be made by the Department. **All** payments are deposited directly into nominated bank accounts.

Please see TASC website under "[Sessional Staff Payments](#)" for details.

FORMS

In order to process payments, certain information is required. In order to provide this information a number of forms must be completed and are listed below. Not all forms need to be completed every year.

Please see the TASC Website: "[Employment Requirements for Sessional Staff](#)" for direct links and further information to the following:

- **Department of Education – Employee Details Form (payroll only)**
 - Payroll payments are deposited directly into bank accounts. This is the only payment method available. It is important, therefore, that full bank account details are provided on this form. Failure to provide the necessary details will delay payment. If you are a current employee of the Department of Education or have previously completed this form and do not wish to advise any changes, you do not need to complete another one.
- **Retirement Benefits Fund Board Form (payroll only)**
 - If this form is not completed superannuation will automatically be deducted from your payment at the rate of 5%.
- **Employment Declaration Form (payroll only)**
 - If an Employment Declaration Form is not completed and lodged with the Department, tax will be deducted at the top marginal rate. If you have already provided this form to the Department of Education and do not wish to advise any changes, you do not need to complete another one.

SETTING EXAMINERS/CRITICS

Setting Examiners and Critics will receive payment when the exam paper and the correlating answer key/assessment guide/matrix are finalised. Once finalised, TASC will authorise the Department to process the payment. A TASC claim form does **not** need to be completed, however, the Department may require an Employee Details Form, an RBF Form or an Employment Declaration Form if these have not already been provided (refer to section on 'Forms'). You will be contacted if any of these forms are required.

TRAVEL/ACCOMMODATION

TASC will pay either the standard State Service travel and accommodation rates or hire car equivalent rates (travel only) to examiners where they are required to stay away from home or to travel. Prior approval by TASC is required for **all** travel and accommodation arrangements.

A TASC 'Travel Claim Form' must be completed and forwarded to TASC. This form asks for bank account details. You do **not** need to complete an Employee Details Form, an RBF Form or an Employment Declaration

Form when claiming travel related expenses (refer to section on 'Forms').

RELIEF

TASC will cover teacher relief costs for those involved in the setting process when required to attend an authorised TASC meeting during a time they would normally be teaching.

A TASC 'Relief Claim Form' must be completed and forwarded to TASC.

POLICY ON THE REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES OF ATTENDING TASC MEETINGS

TASC will make the necessary arrangements to enable people to attend meetings called for assessment purposes. TASC will endeavour to minimise costs without in any way jeopardising the comfort or safety of those attending meetings. **No claims for meeting expenses will be approved for payment unless a meeting notice has been issued by TASC.**

HIRE CARS OR PRIVATE CARS

It is expected that, wherever possible, people will utilise Corporate cars and share cars to reduce the costs to TASC. For meetings where it is not feasible, TASC will arrange for the use of hire cars to enable people to travel to meetings. *Prior approval for the use of a hire car must be sought from the appropriate TASC officer. Avis is the authorised rental company and when contacted TASC will make a booking for a hire car.*

For some people it is not possible to use a hire car because there is no agency in a nearby town. In such cases TASC will pay the per kilometre occasional user rate, according to the State Government General Conditions of Employment Award, for the journey. On a normal work day for the person travelling, TASC will pay no more than the equivalent cost of travel from the person's place of employment. *It should be noted that TASC will not pay the cost of any traffic offences, including parking fines.*

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

All meeting will be scheduled between the hours of 10.00am and 3.00pm to enable time for travel to meetings if required. Most meetings will not require travel as Skype facilities will be available. For meetings that are over more than one day's duration, TASC will, *with prior approval from the appropriate TASC officer*, pay the cost of one night's accommodation and associated meals, i.e. dinner and/or breakfast. The allowance amounts paid are according to the Department of Education's Schedule of Allowances

A meal allowance will only be paid where people have travelled outside a 60km radius of their normal place of employment.

RELIEF TEACHER PAYMENTS

Invitations for people to attend TASC meetings will usually make clear whether or not relief teacher payments to schools will be available. If a teacher is unsure if a relief payment will be made they should contact the appropriate TASC officer. A relief payment will be made to a school, where relief costs have been incurred due to the attendance of a teacher at an authorised TASC meeting.

The rate paid is the amount set by the Department of Education at the beginning of each school year.

HOW TO CLAIM

Travel and accommodation, and relief forms are available from the TASC website. Relief claims from non-government schools must be made on a Tax Invoice (but should also have attached a signed copy of the Relief Teacher claim form).



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