

Setting Examiners & Exam Critics Handbook



March 2021

- All Setting Examiners and Exam Critics employed by TASC **MUST** follow the instructions in this handbook, as required by the Statement of Duties for these roles.
- **If you have questions** or are unsure about any aspect of your role:
 - speak with your Setting Examiner, in the first instance
 - questions that cannot be resolved can be sent to the TASC Assessment Team at tasc.assessment.team@tasc.tas.gov.au

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your appointment as a *Setting Examiner* or *Exam Critic* for the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC).

TASC's external assessment setters have an essential and meaningful role in leading the writing and reviewing of Year 11 and 12 external assessments and exams.

External assessment is a key part of all Level 3 and 4 courses for Tasmania's senior secondary students.

Thank you for your enthusiasm to deliver effective student assessments that allow all learners to demonstrate their knowledge and be assessed against the learning outcomes for their chosen courses.

We look forward to working with you in making this year's exams the best yet.

SECTION 1 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Educators and former educators are appointed to the following roles annually to lead the drafting and developing TASC external exam papers:

- Setting Examiner(s)
- Exam Critic.

Each person appointed has a specific role to undertake and is responsible to TASC for the performance of the duties and completing processes associated with that role on time.

To be appointed to the role of Setting Examiner or Critic you will have:

- a deep and broad knowledge of course content (generally five or more years teaching in that topic area)
- demonstrated ability to plan and deliver on time
- a creative approach to evaluating learning outcomes
- skills and expertise in building effective assessment items
- analytical and problem-solving skills
- excellent written communication skills
- the highest standards of accuracy and an affinity for meticulous work
- a commitment to TASC values of Connectedness, Equity, Future focus, Integrity and Learning.

Importantly, you must not be teaching the course during the same year you write or review the exam for that course. This ensures there is no perceived or actual conflict of interest.

SETTING EXAMINER

The duties of the Setting Examiner are to:

- Develop an exam paper on time and in accordance with the current course content, the guidelines for external assessment and any other guidelines provided by TASC.
- Develop the correlating solutions/marking guide/assessment matrix/marking rubric or tool for that external assessment. (The final exam paper will not be approved until these marking materials are provided.)
- Attend the Critic Meeting with TASC staff and the Exam Critics to review the first draft of the exam paper (in accordance with TASC procedures).
- Determine what changes will be made to the paper taking into account the comments received from the critics during the Critic Meeting and any subsequent draft of the exam.
- Proofread the final draft of the exam paper.
- Check the final copy of the exam paper after printing.
- Advise of any specific stationery requirements or other materials that will need to be provided to students for the exam (e.g. graph paper, maps).

During the external exam and marking periods, TASC may need to contact you for information if queries arise about the exam paper. Please advise TASC in advance if there will be any periods when you will not be available to be contacted during November and December.

All exam papers must be finalised ready for TASC approval by the end of August of each year. See the [Exam Paper Setting Process](#) for more information.

EXAM CRITIC

To ensure that assessment tasks are correctly prepared and effective, TASC undertakes a series of checks. The most substantial check is the use of Exam Critics to evaluate the exam paper.

At least two Exam Critics are appointed per course to fully appraise, proofread and make recommendations to improve the exam paper.

The duties of the Exam Critics are to:

- Comprehensively review the first draft of the exam paper, including undertaking/completing the exam and noting the time taken to produce acceptable answers. The Setting Examiner will not provide the solutions/marking guide to allow you to prepare your own answers.
- Submit to TASC any suggestions for improvement, written comments and relevant information using the *Critique of Exam Paper – First Draft* booklet provided. Be as specific as possible in detailing any concerns you have and/or why you have suggested a change. This could include suggesting possible alternative exam questions for consideration by the Setting Examiner.

- Attend the Critic Meeting with TASC officers and the Setting Examiner to discuss the first draft of the exam paper and review against previous year's feedback and the External Assessment Specifications.
- Proofread the second draft of the exam paper, including reviewing the draft solutions/marketing guide/assessment matrix/marketing rubric or tool. Submit to TASC the findings of your final review using the *Critique of Exam Paper – Second Draft* booklet provided. The Setting Examiner will use this feedback to assist them to develop the final version of the exam paper to submit to TASC.

The timeframes to complete the critique processes are listed in the [Key Dates](#). These timeframes must be met to ensure the exam development process is not delayed.

All exam papers must be finalised ready for TASC approval by the end of August of each year. See the [Exam Paper Setting Process](#) for more information.

SECTION 2 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

TASC employs people annually to assist with the administration of its external assessment program. These people may have privileged access to information about 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 their 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. All Setting Examiners and Critics must sign and submit the [Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Declaration Form](#) found on the [TASC website](#) under [employment requirements for sessional staff](#).

EXAM INTEGRITY

It is vital that the security and integrity of every TASC exam is maintained, both during the development process and once the exam has been finalised.

Any security breach or compromise to the integrity of the exam can undermine the reliability of a TASC external assessment and the ability of TASC to meet legislated requirements. It can also invalidate thousands of student results.

To maintain the integrity of TASC exams, TASC has implemented extremely tight security measures around the production, distribution and management of the exams, including the solutions/marking guide/assessment matrix/marking rubric or tool produced.

DISCUSSION / HANDLING OF EXAM PAPERS

Do not advise others who are not TASC staff that you are involved in setting or critiquing a written external assessment.

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

Working drafts of the exam paper or individual questions being prepared or reviewed by Setting Examiner(s) and Exam Critics must be kept securely at all times and must not be identified as being a part of an exam. Setting Examiners and Exam Critics must follow all instructions provided by TASC in relation to the security, delivery and submission of exam materials.

No person can retain copies of exam 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.

SECTION 3 – EXAM DEVELOPMENT

KEY DATES

Action	Responsibility	Date
First draft of the exam provided to TASC	Setting Examiners	By the end of April*
First draft of the exam issued to Exam Critics for review	TASC	At least two weeks before scheduled Critic Meeting
First draft of the exam is reviewed, <i>Critique of Exam Paper – First draft</i> completed, and all documentation is returned to TASC	Exam Critics	Within two weeks of receiving documentation (must be received by TASC <i>before</i> scheduled Critic Meeting)
Critic Meeting is scheduled	TASC	May – June/July*
Second draft of the exam is provided to Setting Examiner and Exam Critics	TASC	Immediately after Critic Meeting if possible. If further formatting is required, no later than 3 working days after the Critic Meeting (via Teams or post)
Second draft of the exam is reviewed and returned to TASC, along with solutions/ marking guide/ assessment matrix/ marking rubric or tool	Setting Examiners and Exam Critics	Within two weeks of receipt and no later than the third week in July*
Final draft of the exam is prepared to reflect comments received, and provided to Setting Examiner for approval	TASC	As soon as practicable
Approved final draft of the exam is returned to TASC for Executive Officer approval	Setting Examiners	By end of August*
Print copy of the exam is provided to the printers	TASC	By end of September*
Printers proof copy of the exam is reviewed	TASC and Setting Examiners	By September*
If required, changes made for new proof to be printed	TASC	As required
Proof of the exam approved for printing (copies for each candidate)	TASC	By September*

* Specific dates are determined and advised by TASC each year

EXAM PAPER SETTING PROCESS

The setting of exam papers will occur in the following sequence:

- Appointment of Setting Examiner(s) and Exam Critics – TASC will call for expressions of interest.
- Setting Examiner delivers first draft of exam to TASC.
- TASC delivers the first draft exam to the critic team (minimum of two Exam Critics plus the Setting Examiner) with the first review draft booklet *Critique of Exam Paper – First Draft* to be completed prior to the Critic Meeting for submission with the reviewed first draft.
- Exam Critics will also work through the exam and answer each question. The solutions/marking guide/assessment matrix/marking rubric or tool (if available) will not be provided to the Exam Critic at this time. This allows the Exam Critic to prepare their own answers prior to the critic's meeting and test the Setting Examiner's expectations.
- The Exam Critic team must return the first draft of the exam to TASC within two weeks.
- A Critic Meeting is then held. This will be organised through invitation from a TASC External Assessment Officer. TASC will provide an agenda with the invitation. The Exam Critics and the Setting Examiner(s) then meet at TASC or via an online/virtual meeting with an External Assessment Officer from TASC. The agenda for the Critic Meetings will include the following:
 - Review and incorporate the Exam Critics feedback on the exam using the draft papers returned to TASC and the *Critique of Exam Paper* booklet. The original electronic copy of the exam will be updated throughout the Critic Meeting as required.
 - Review any provided solutions/marking guide/assessment matrix/marking rubric or tools that have been developed at that time. TASC will provide the Setting Examiner(s) answers so the Exam Critics can check for any discrepancies with their own answers. If the solutions are not available at this time, this process must be done at a later stage but before end of June in the relevant year.
- During the Critic Meeting the Exam Critics team will undertake the following processes:
 - Review the previous year's *Feedback to Setting Examiners* and ensure comments have been considered and implemented where applicable.
 - Review the *External Assessment Specifications* (EAS) (available on the [TASC website](#)) to ensure that each part of the exam addresses each specification appropriately.

- Review the marks associated with each question/exam part to ensure it relates adequately to the level of difficulty/complexity required (is weighted appropriately).
- Review the exam to ensure students with varying achievement levels (Satisfactory Achievement (SA)/ High Achievement (HA)) can demonstrate their capacity.
- Ensure that there is the correct amount of space/paper required for the answers.
- Ensure the estimated times required to complete the exam are compatible with the expectations of the drafted exam.
- Provide an estimation of the minimum/ maximum time taken to mark each part of the exam. This information will be used to inform the number of Markers employed in relation to the exam.
- Check that any graphics/ pictures/ images in the exam are readable and legible for students and alter where required noting that, unless specified otherwise, all exam papers are printed in grey scale only.
- Conduct other required checks as outlined in the Critics review booklet, including spelling, grammar and formatting.
- The second draft of the exam paper is then securely delivered to the Exam Critics team for a final review. Where possible the solutions/marketing guide/assessment matrix/marketing rubric or tool for the exam will be attached at this time. A *Critique of Exam Paper – Second Draft* booklet will also be provided for completion.
- The Exam Critics submit the review of both the exam paper and updated solutions/ marketing guide/ assessment matrix/ marketing rubric or tool to TASC within two weeks using the *Critique of Exam Paper – Second Draft* booklet.
- Changes are made to the second draft of the exam paper under the guidance of the Setting Examiner via an online/virtual meeting or face-to-face at TASC offices once all feedback on the second drafts are returned. Only the Setting Examiner has the capacity to accept or reject suggestions made within the Exam Critics responses in the *Critique of Exam Paper – Second Draft* booklet.
- On completion of all changes, the final draft is printed and reviewed by the Setting Examiner for submission to the Executive Officer, including the solutions/marketing guide/assessment matrix/marketing rubric or tool. If the final draft is completed via an online/virtual meeting TASC then sends out an updated draft of the exam and solutions/marketing guide/assessment matrix/marketing rubric or tool to the Setting Examiner.

This process is periodically reviewed by TASC to ensure continuous quality improvement.

GUIDE TO WRITING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

The purpose of assessment instruments is to gather evidence about a student's capacity in relation to the learning outcomes of a particular course. Assessment instruments include supervised exams, tests, assignments, projects, practical performances, orals, listening (aurals), 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.

Assessment items will focus on the specific knowledge and skills to be assessed, drawing on assumed knowledge and/or background material provided to contextualise the task presented. The layout of assessment items, and other cues, will guide students about the requirements of the task set by the assessment item.

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

1. Each assessment item assesses on face value what it purports to assess, using clear, unambiguous criteria.
2. Each assessment instrument is delivered under clear, definite and specified conditions that are substantially the same for all students and do not present an inappropriate barrier to equal participation by all.
3. Assessment instruments relevant to a particular course provide a range and balance of contexts, types of instruments and modes of response.
4. 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.
5. Students with specific needs are assessed in a manner that enables equal access and opportunity to participate in assessments, is fair to all students, and ensures the validity of results.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT ITEMS

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

The guidelines below specifically relate to written questions requiring written responses:

- 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.

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

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

1. Work within the framework provided. This includes the course document, the sample exam paper, and 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 required assessment criteria. Each item of the assessment instrument must be able to be mapped back to the course document.
3. The assessment instrument must appropriately balance the various sections of the course.
4. When possible, ensure there is a range of items in terms of the types and size of response required, for example, closed items that seek a single correct response, items where there are multiple correct responses and 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 students will be able to 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 use ideas from other sources, no single other test or source should significantly influence the instrument.
8. Restrict the number of optional items. Providing too many optional items can reduce the reliability of the assessment as different students can, in effect, take different tests.

(b) Assessment items (individual questions or tasks)

1. Try to identify and eliminate language, symbols, words, phrases and other content that are can be regarded as offensive by members of a specific racial, ethnic, gender or other group, except when judged essential for adequate representation of the content.
2. Do not use any stimulus material that could reasonably be seen as offensive due to sexual or obscene content.
3. Avoid the use of colloquial terms which may not be familiar to all students.
4. 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.
5. 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 intended manner.
6. Present the assessment item as clearly as possible through the appropriate choice of words, layout, cues, visual design and format.
7. Develop items that are inclusive of students' diverse backgrounds, for example, when constructing case study material. Avoid gender and culturally specific material as much as possible. Stereotypes must only be used if doing so avoids unnecessary distraction.
8. Make the tasks as authentic as possible by setting items in a realistic context that will be reasonably familiar to candidates. Do not use significantly emotional events that may trigger strong negative reactions from some students, such as a tsunami or car accident.
9. Stimulus material must have the effect of clarifying the task and not act as a distractor.
10. Stimulus material should not include colour or graphics unless these are essential to what is being assessed. Graphics will normally be presented in grey scale.
11. Instructions to students should clearly indicate how to make responses, such as by writing, using diagrams, dot points etc. Instructions should also be given in the use of any equipment likely to be unfamiliar to candidates.
12. Indicate for each item a point value, weight or estimated time limit for answering. Clearly separate item parts and indicate their value.
13. Match the type of test item to the learning objectives and criteria being assessed. For example, 'Name and categorise...' would be appropriate for a restricted response such as matching, whereas 'describe and analyse....' would indicate that an extended response essay is required.
14. Ask questions to which some responses are better than others, particularly for short-answer questions.
15. For problem solving items, state whether the student must show his/her analysis and work procedures for full or part marks.
16. Do not rely on any assumed general knowledge unless it can be reasonably presumed that students have had ready access to this knowledge.

17. Develop a Marking Guide for each assessment item to communicate to Markers essential features of the intended student response.
18. Check that there is an appropriate amount of space (paper) available for students to provide their answers.
19. Check that the estimated time required to complete the exam is compatible with the specified exam duration.
20. Provide an estimation of the minimum and maximum times taken to mark each part of the exam (this information will be useful for the employment of the Markers for the current year).
21. Check that any graphics, pictures or images in the exam are readable and legible for the students and alter where required, noting that exams will be printed in grey scale unless otherwise specified by TASC.
22. Ensure that the exam allow students with varying achievement levels (SA/HA) to demonstrate their capacity.
23. Conduct other checks as appropriate, including to ensure spelling, grammar and formatting are correct.

EXAM SETTING CHECKLIST

Key points to remember when setting exam papers and/or questions:

- ☐ If using stimulus material, the questions must relate to that stimulus material.
- ☐ If a quotation is used, the question must require the student to engage in some way with the quote.
- ☐ Ensure all questions align with the content of the course and facilitate assessment of the externally assessed criterion. Each assessment item must be able to be mapped back to the course.
- ☐ Ensure no question assumes knowledge or skills not covered in the course.
- ☐ Ensure an even balance of questions against each criterion being assessed.
- ☐ Avoid using references to actual given names *where possible* (for example, Jane bought 7 apples at...) This also applies to business names. Avoid using names that could cause confusion; for example, 'Zip Fitness' is too close to 'Zap Fitness', and such names can be distracting for students.
- ☐ Questions should be drafted in such a way to provide as few options for response as possible.
- ☐ Ensure that items are not just re-statements of topics (word for word) from the course document. Assessment items should require the student to make some choices about what is relevant rather than just repeat the given content.
- ☐ Reconsider the use of the word 'evaluate', to avoid confusion. Use 'describe' where appropriate. If students are required to 'judge something against some criteria', this must be very clear.
- ☐ Comprehension passages must include a maximum of two voices. If two voices are used, one must be one female and one male.
- ☐ Review the External Assessment Specifications (EAS) (available on the [Courses](#) page of the [TASC website](#)) to ensure that each part of the exam meets the specification requirements.
- ☐ Ensure the marks allocated to each question/ exam part adequately relate to the level of difficulty/ complexity required (weighted appropriately). Re-calculate total marks according to total of each question as appropriate. You do not need to keep the same total number of marks each year.
- ☐ Ensure there is enough scope in the exam to allow students with varying achievement levels (SA/HA) to demonstrate their capacity.
- ☐ Ensure there are no errors in the exam, including that question and diagram labels match, spelling, grammar and formatting are correct.

SECTION 4 – EMPLOYMENT PAY AND CONDITIONS

The Department of Education (DoE) undertakes all payroll functions on behalf of TASC, including all salary and expense related payments. TASC must first approve all claims before payment can be made by DoE. All payments are deposited directly into nominated bank accounts.

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

PAYROLL

You will need to complete a suite of payroll forms before DoE will be able to correctly process your payments. Not all forms need to be completed every year.

- **DoE – *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 DoE or have previously completed this form and do not wish to advise any changes, you do not need to complete this form again.
- ***Choice of superannuation fund – Standard choice form* (payroll only)**
 - If this form is not completed employer contributions will be paid into DoE's default fund (TasPlan). If you have already provided this form to DoE of Education and do not wish to advise any changes, you do not need to complete the form again.
- ***Tax File Number Declaration* (payroll only)**
 - If a completed *Tax File Number Declaration* is not returned to TASC, DoE may deduct tax at the top marginal rate. If you have already provided this form to DoE and do not wish to advise any changes, you do not need to complete the form again.

Please see [Employment Requirements for Sessional Staff](#) on the [TASC website](#) for direct links and further information.

PAYMENT TIMING

Once the exam paper and the solutions/ marking guide/ assessment matrix/ marking rubric or tool are finalised, TASC authorises DoE to process payments to Setting Examiners and Exam Critics. A TASC claim form does not need to be completed for payment for work completed.

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

For 2021, exam development and review meetings are to be conducted online. As well as being a sensible approach during times of COVID-19 restrictions, online meetings improve access for staff located across the state and reduce the need for travel, accommodation and meal allowances. TASC can provide information and support on secure use of TEAMS through the Assessment team if you would like additional help.

Prior approval by TASC is required for **all** meetings that have travel and accommodation arrangements. Please note, no claims for meeting expenses will be approved for payment unless a meeting notice has been issued by TASC, or TASC has approved the meeting.

If you are required to travel or stay away from home overnight for TASC related work, you will be entitled to payment for reimbursement of the cost of travel in accordance with TASC's *Travel and Accommodation Guidelines*. To claim this allowance, a completed *Travel Advance / Reimbursement of Expenses Claim Form* must be provided to TASC.

HIRE CARS OR PRIVATE CARS

Setting Examiners and Exam Critics are expected to use share cars or corporate fleet cars where possible. Where this is not feasible, TASC can arrange for the use of hire cars to enable travel to meetings. Prior approval for the use of a hire car must be sought from the appropriate TASC officer.

If the use of a hire car is not possible (for example in more remote areas) TASC will pay a 'per kilometre occasional user' allowance consistent with the *DoE Travel Policy*.

Further information is available in TASC's *Travel and Accommodation Guidelines*.

RELIEF

TASC will pay relief claims when a school employs a relief teacher to cover timetabled classes that Setting Examiners and Exam Critics would otherwise be teaching while they are working for TASC. This may include formal compulsory training sessions and Setting Examiner and Exam Critic Meetings at TASC.

Invitations to attend TASC meetings will usually specify whether relief teacher payments to schools are available. If you are unsure whether a relief payment will be made, contact the relevant TASC officer.

Relief payments will be made in accordance with the amount set by DoE at the beginning of each school year. Further information on relief claims is available on the TASC website.