

External assessment guide for Year 12 students

August 2023




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External assessment and the QCE system

All students in General subjects sit an external assessment at the end of Year 12.

In the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system, final results for each General subject are based on your achievement in three internal assessments, which are set and marked by your school, and an external assessment.

External assessments are subject-specific written examinations that are:

- common to all schools
- summative — they count towards overall results for General subjects
- developed and marked by the QCAA using a common marking scheme.

This guide gives you general information to help you prepare for external assessment. It includes tips and strategies for success, details about what to expect and links to important documents and resources.



Who sits the external assessments?

Year 12 students sit external assessments for all General and General (Extension) subjects they study.

For most subjects, there is one assessment paper. In Mathematics and Science subjects, there are two papers – some assessments are held on the same day, others are held on consecutive days.

The small number of students who undertake the Senior External Examination (SEE) program will also sit external assessments. The SEE program is only for adult learners and Year 12 students who are unable to access particular senior subjects at their school, usually languages other than English.

Applied subjects do not have external assessments.

When are the external assessments held?

External assessments are held in Term 4 each year.

In 2023, the assessments run from Monday 23 October to Tuesday 14 November.

Two sessions will be held each day (AM and PM) and start times may vary slightly between schools. Your school will tell you the exact start time and location for each of your assessments.

You can view the external assessment timetable on the [QCAA website](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/timetable) (www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/timetable).

Timetable clashes

The timetable is designed to minimise clashes, but they can happen.

The QCAA will identify any timetable clashes and will reschedule the assessment/s to another session.

Where there is a clash within a morning or afternoon session, you will be allocated to the alternative session on the same day.

If this occurs, you will need to sign an agreement that you will not engage in academic misconduct by discussing the test questions with students who have completed the test. The QCAA may conduct additional authenticity checks on your work if your assessment has been rescheduled.

Where are the external assessments held?

Usually, you will sit external assessments at your school. In some cases, a variation to venue may be required if:

- your main learning provider
 - does not have a suitable external assessment venue
 - is a distance education provider
 - has students at multiple campuses
- you
 - are geographically isolated
 - are representing Australia or your state in an official capacity at a sporting, academic or cultural event
 - are currently living outside of Queensland
 - have an illness or injury preventing you from attending your school.

Events such as family holidays, birthdays or weddings are not valid reasons to apply for a variation to venue.

In most cases where a variation to venue is required, your school or main learning provider will apply to the QCAA. If a variation to venue is approved, you will need to show photo identification to the venue supervisor on the day of your assessment.

What will be tested?

Each subject syllabus contains specific details about the external assessment, including what will be tested, the format of the assessment and the response length.

The syllabuses are available on the senior syllabuses page on the [QCAA website](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects) (www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects).



What equipment will I need?

The equipment you need for each external assessment depends on the subject.

As well as general items, you may need specific items such as calculators or electronic devices.

It is important you have everything you need for each assessment. Supervisors will check your equipment, including calculators, before you enter the examination room.

General items approved for all assessments

You can bring the following items into all your examinations:

- ✓ black or blue pens
- ✓ 2B pencils, sharpener and eraser (**Note:** A 2B pencil is only required for multiple-choice questions and drawing graphs or diagrams. Black or blue pens must be used for all other written responses.)
- ✓ highlighters — students should not highlight their responses but are free to highlight stimulus or questions when permitted by the exam supervisor
- ✓ a clear plastic ruler
- ✓ water in a clear unlabelled bottle
- ✓ asthma inhaler.

You may use a clear plastic container or ziplock bag to carry your equipment if needed.

Items not permitted in the examination room

The items below are prohibited in examination rooms, except if specifically approved as access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA) or listed as approved equipment for an assessment, e.g. for a subject that requires students to use a device:

- ⊘ mobile phones
- ⊘ smart watches and fitness trackers
- ⊘ any other electronic device that stores, retrieves, displays or communicates digital information
- ⊘ correction fluid or correction tape
- ⊘ dictionaries
- ⊘ erasable pens
- ⊘ blank paper, notes, any printed/written material
- ⊘ tissues*.

* Schools may supply tissues in assessment rooms, but students cannot bring them in.

Subject-specific equipment

Depending on your subject, you may need specific equipment. The external assessment equipment list includes information about subject-specific equipment, including QCAA-approved calculators, student devices or other items you may need. It is available on the [QCAA website](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/administration) (www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/administration).

QCAA-approved calculators

Calculators are only permitted for some assessments. If you are sitting an assessment that requires a calculator, it must:

- meet the requirements set out in the scientific calculator list (www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/common/snr_syll_ea_scientific_calculators_list.pdf) or graphics calculator list (www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/common/snr_syll_ea_graphics_calculators_list.pdf)
- be handheld and solar or battery powered
- be cleared of memory before the assessment.

For assessments that permit the use of a non-programmable calculator (Accounting, Economics, Geography, Legal Studies), the calculator must be handheld and solar or battery powered. It must not allow access to the following functions: computer algebra system (CAS), spellchecker, dictionary, thesaurus or translator (see scientific calculator list).

Student devices

Some assessments require you to use a student device, such as a battery-powered laptop or tablet to access a digital stimulus. Your school will advise you of the arrangements that apply to student devices for your assessments — you will either bring your own device or your school will provide one.

Depending on the subject, digital stimulus may include audio (MP3) and video (MP4) files. Your school will either give you an individual USB with the required audio or audiovisual file or access to a folder containing the file.

The external assessment equipment list includes information about subjects that require student devices or other items. It is available on the [QCAA website](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/administration) (www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/administration).

What you will need to access the digital stimulus

To access the digital stimulus, you will need:

- individual access to a student device (e.g. desktop computer, laptop) so you can listen to and/or view the files as many times as you choose throughout the assessment session
- the latest version of a media player that plays MP3 and MP4 files installed on the device you are using
- wired earphones/headphones consistent with the guidelines for academic integrity (wireless/Bluetooth-enabled earphones/headphones are not allowed).



How to prepare

What your school will do to help you prepare

Your school will help you prepare for external assessments by teaching the subject matter in the syllabus.

The QCAA has developed sample papers for schools and students to use. The samples allow schools to understand how the syllabus objectives will be assessed and will help you understand what to expect during the examinations.

Past papers are also available. Your school may use the sample papers or past papers as mock examinations. This gives you the opportunity to revise and test your subject knowledge and helps you understand the types of questions you may be asked and how you will need to respond.

You can find the sample papers and past papers in the assessment tab on each General syllabus page on the [QCAA website \(www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects\)](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects).

What you can do to prepare

Get organised:

- check the external assessment timetable so you know when your assessments will be held — your school will set the start time within the prescribed window for your assessment. You must check your school timetable, as start and finish times may vary slightly
- develop a study timetable to help keep you on track — don't forget to schedule regular breaks and allow time for things you enjoy so you can maintain a healthy balance
- create a space where you can study that is free of distractions and has everything you need
- limit distractions such as social media
- consider forming a study group with classmates
- check the equipment list to make sure you have everything you need.

Get academic:

- download the subject syllabus. You can find them on the General syllabus page on the QCAA website
- check the external assessment description in the syllabus — it gives you an overview of how you'll be assessed, what the objectives are and what you'll be required to do
- review the subject matter to be assessed and look over the assessment techniques
- view the sample assessment papers and past papers — they will give you extra insights about the type of questions you may be asked. You'll find them on the Assessment tab on each General syllabus page on the QCAA website. Your teacher has access to other samples that they may use in class under examination conditions
- identify how much space the word limits take up in your handwriting and practise writing responses within the limits.

Strategies for success during the test

The following five strategies can help you manage your time when you're sitting the external assessments.

- 1 Use the perusal/ planning time effectively**

This is where you should read and consider the assessment. During perusal time, you're not allowed to write on the test paper or the response book, or use a calculator. Perusal time is your chance to get an overview before you start, so look over the paper thoroughly and think about your approach.

Unlike perusal time, planning time allows you to consider the assessment and write a plan for how you will answer the questions. You can make notes, but you're not allowed to start writing in the response book. You will be given two pieces of planning paper to write on. Notes made during planning time are collected by your school, but are not marked or used as evidence of achievement.
- 2 Manage your time**

The time limit for each examination will be enforced, so you will need to plan your time and pace yourself. Set timeframes for each part of the assessment and try to stick to them. The assessment is designed to allow ample time for you to answer. If you are unsure about a question or believe there is an error in it, try to answer it as best you can before moving on to the next question.
- 3 Think and plan before you respond**

Give yourself time to understand the meaning of each task or question and what it's asking you to do. Make sure you do everything that you're asked.

Your responses will be scanned for marking, so pay careful attention to instructions about writing spaces. Do not write in spaces or on pages that have an instruction like 'Do not write on this page'. These spaces are not scanned, so any work you do there will not be marked.
- 4 Use response spaces**

Response spaces are designed to fit the response length, but if you have large handwriting or make an error and need extra space, there are spare pages at the back of the question and response book. You can also ask the supervisor for an extra response book.

Some assessments require you to answer on a diagram, graph or map. If you make an error, a spare copy is available at the back of the response book. You can also ask the supervisor if you need another copy.
- 5 Review your work**

Allow some time to check your work and go back to any questions you were unsure about before the end of each assessment. If you have used additional response materials, you will need to attach a barcode (from your place card) to each response to make sure they are scanned and marked.

If your assessment contains multiple-choice questions, follow these basic tips:

 - use a 2B pencil and colour bubbles fully
 - check you haven't coloured bubbles on the same line
 - check you haven't missed a line
 - change back to pen after you finish the multiple-choice questions.

Important things to remember

- Stay positive — be well prepared and maintain a healthy attitude, so you can do your best work.
- Get plenty of rest the night before each assessment. Staying up late to study the night before an examination can make you tired and may affect your ability to concentrate.
- Double check when your assessments are and the equipment you will need.
- Check your transport arrangements so you can arrive well before the scheduled time.

What to expect on examination days

The QCAA sets specific procedures for students, schools and supervisors to follow for each external assessment.

Directions for students

You must observe the QCAA's student directions as well as your school's rules and those of any other external assessment venue you attend. If you breach any of the directions, your external assessment result may be withheld. It is important that you check the directions for students to make sure you know what is expected of you. The directions for students are available on the [QCAA website \(www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/administration\)](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/external-assessment/administration).





Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

Students who have a disability or impairment, a medical condition or experience circumstances that may be a barrier to their performance in external assessment may be eligible for access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA). These may include the following adjustments:

- extra time to complete the assessment
- rest breaks during the assessment
- alternative format of papers, e.g. enlarged font size or braille
- using a computer or assistive technology to read or respond to the assessment.

In most cases, your school or main learning provider will have already made AARA applications on your behalf.

Your teacher can provide you with an outcome letter from the QCAA. On the day of the assessment, you can choose to use all, part or none of the approved adjustments. Talk to your external assessment coordinator (EA coordinator) for more information.

Illness and misadventure

If your ability to attend or participate in assessments is adversely affected by an illness or unexpected event, you may be eligible to apply for AARA. This will only apply if the event:

- is unforeseen and beyond your control, e.g. death of a family member
- is not of your own choosing or that of your parents/carers, e.g. not a family holiday
- has an adverse effect on your ability to attend or participate in the assessment.

You should contact your school as soon as possible if you are unwell or experience circumstances that prevent you from attending the assessment.

If you are unwell, you should not attend assessment sessions. Illness may include COVID-19, influenza, gastroenteritis, glandular fever or any other condition. Your parent/carer should contact your school immediately. The EA coordinator will provide advice about the QCAA's illness and misadventure arrangements and will notify the principal.

Students should seek medical advice and get a doctor's report to submit to the school. The school will then make an illness and misadventure application to the QCAA. To make an informed decision about an illness and misadventure application for medical reasons, the QCAA requires a report from an independent health professional that includes the following details:

- the illness, condition or event (including details of a diagnosis, where applicable)
- date of diagnosis, onset or occurrence
- symptoms, treatment or course of action related to the condition or event
- explanation of the probable effect of the illness, condition or event on the student's participation in the assessment.

For non-medical applications, you will need written evidence from a relevant independent professional or an independent third party such as a social worker, member of the clergy, police officer, solicitor or funeral director. The person providing the documentation must not be a relative or have a close personal relationship with you.

For more information about AARA or illness and misadventure, visit the [QCAA website \(www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/aara\)](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/aara).

Academic misconduct

If you engage in academic misconduct, you may not receive your external assessment results and/or subject results.

Academic misconduct includes a range of behaviours, including those listed in the table below.

Type of misconduct	Examples
Cheating while under supervised conditions	<p>A student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins to write during perusal time or continues to write after the instruction to stop writing is given uses unauthorised equipment or materials has any notation written on their body, clothing or any object brought into an assessment room communicates with any person other than a supervisor during an examination, e.g. through speaking, signing, electronic device or other means, such as passing notes, making gestures or sharing equipment with another student.
Collusion	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more than one student works to produce a response and that response is submitted as individual work by one or multiple students a student assists another student to commit an act of academic misconduct a student gives their assessment response to another student a student receives another student's response to an assessment.
Contract cheating	<p>A student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pays for a person or a service to complete a response to an assessment sells or trades a response to an assessment.
Copying work	<p>A student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deliberately or knowingly makes it possible for another student to copy responses looks at another student's work during a supervised assessment copies another student's work during a supervised assessment.
Disclosing or receiving information about an assessment	<p>A student or other person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gives or accesses unauthorised information that compromises the integrity of the assessment, such as stimulus or suggested answers/responses, before a response to an assessment is completed makes any attempt to give or receive access to secure assessment materials.
Fabricating	<p>A student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> invents or exaggerates data lists incorrect or fictitious references.
Impersonation	<p>A student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arranges for another person to complete a response to an assessment in their place, e.g. impersonating the student in a performance or supervised assessment completes a response to an assessment in place of another student.
Misconduct during a supervised assessment	<p>A student distracts and/or disrupts others in an assessment room.</p>
Plagiarism or lack of referencing	<p>A student completely or partially copies or alters another person's work without attribution (another person's work may include text, audio or audiovisual material, figures, tables, design, images, information or ideas).</p>



Results

How will my assessments be marked?

Multiple-choice response sheets are scanned electronically. You will receive one mark for each correct response. You will receive zero for each incorrect response and zero for items you do not attempt or where you have given more than one response. As you will not lose marks for incorrect multiple-choice responses, it is recommended you attempt every question.

Extended-response tasks are marked independently by at least two different QCAA-trained markers. The markers will apply specific criteria to your writing, and their marking will be monitored to ensure fairness and consistency.

Short-response questions are also marked by QCAA-trained markers. They will make judgments about your work against a specific marking scheme, and their marking will be monitored as part of the QCAA's quality-control processes.

Your examination response papers will remain the property of the QCAA and will not be returned to you after the assessment.

How does external assessment contribute to final results?

In most General subjects, external assessment contributes 25% towards your subject result. In Mathematics and Science subjects, it contributes 50%.

How are final subject results calculated?

The results from your external assessments will give you a score out of 25 or 50, depending on the subject. This result is then added to your three internal assessment results (for Units 3 and 4) to give a mark out of 100 and a grade of A to E for each subject.

The marks you received for your internal assessments are not affected by your external assessment result.

For more information about how results are calculated for General subjects, visit the [QCAA website \(www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/results/calculating-results-general-subjects\)](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/results/calculating-results-general-subjects).

When and where can I view my results?

Your external assessment results and final subject results will be available in your learning account on Friday 15 December 2023, together with your Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) (if eligible).

You can access your learning account via the Student Portal on the [myQCE website](#). You'll need your 10-digit Learner Unique Identifier (LUI) the first time you register for the Student Portal. Then you can log in with your email and nominated password. We recommend you use a personal (not school) email when you register so you can easily reset your account if you forget your password and can no longer access your school email.

For more information about your learning account and the Student Portal, visit the [myQCE website](#) (www.myqce.qcaa.qld.edu.au/your-qce-pathway/student-portal-and-learning-account)

Can I ask the QCAA to check my external assessment results?

If you believe there has been a marking error, you can apply to the QCAA to have your external assessment or Senior External Examination script re-examined. You will need to submit a reassessment form and the application fee (via the Verification and reassessment tab in your learning account in the Student Portal) by 15 January 2024.

The reassessment may decrease, confirm or increase your result. If the result changes, the QCAA will issue a new Senior Statement or Statement of Results, advise the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) of the new result and refund the application fee. If the QCAA decides to reduce the original result, you may apply to the QCAA Chief Executive Officer for a review of the decision.

More information about results is available on the [QCAA website](#) (www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/results/checking-results).

What contributes to the ATAR

QTAC is responsible for calculating students' tertiary entrance ranks, known as Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks (ATARs).

The only information QTAC uses to calculate an ATAR is a student's final subject results. They are not supplied with individual external or internal assessment results.

An ATAR is calculated from either:

- a student's best five General subject results
- or
- a student's best results in a combination of four General subject results, plus one Applied subject result or completed VET qualification at Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate III level or above.

If a student is eligible for an ATAR in both categories, QTAC will use their higher ATAR.

To be eligible for an ATAR, students must satisfactorily complete a QCAA English subject. While students must meet this standard, it is not mandatory for the English result to be included in the ATAR calculation.

You can find more information about the ATAR on the [QTAC website](#) (www.qtac.edu.au).

More information

myqce.qcaa.qld.edu.au

The myQCE website provides information about subjects and courses, assessment and results, study tips and more.

qcaa.qld.edu.au

The QCAA website provides information about senior secondary curriculum and assessment, including syllabuses for QCAA subjects and courses.