



Wellington Mathematics Association
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Dear Kristine

Level 1 Mathematics and Statistics CAT 2016

In the past few days I have received comments from over twenty Wellington schools to the general effect that this year's MCAT paper was a poor assessment of this standard. The questions were very hard, repetitive and required a high level of literacy. Many have felt that the questions are more suited to a higher level and were not reflective of the standard.

This evening over thirty teachers from 18 schools met and endorsed these comments. They felt that the changes signalled in the assessment specifications were not explicit enough to indicate the level of difficulty encountered.

I do not intend to provide a question by question analysis of the paper, no doubt you will see or receive such comments in due course. However, there are some larger issues I would like to raise.

- i. Student confidence in maths (particularly at lower levels) has been eroded.
- ii. Teacher confidence in the anticipated level of an exam has been lost.
- iii. Mathematics is a language in itself which is more than a literacy test. There are some basic skills necessary which need learning and testing.
- iv. AS91027 is a gateway standard leading to calculus, physics and chemistry and to a raft of STEM careers which this country needs.
- v. Changing the marking schedule to effectively scale the results will not help those who were despondent and failed to answer few or any questions.
- vi. This was the first external exam sat by most pupils. Their trepidation in facing externals at the end of year has now increased.
- vii. Algebra is not problem solving, particularly at this beginning level.

I understand there are many processes involved in setting an exam and it is not possible to undo what has happened. Although it would be good to have the exam re-issued, I would expect this to be too difficult. We would ask that the following assurances are given:

1. NZQA acknowledge that this paper was poorly set and apologise to teachers, pupils and parents.
2. That schools have the option of using the assessed grades or the derived grades from school exams.
3. Bring forward the review of the standard to now and include maths teacher input. (Many considered the title of the standard should be "Demonstrate Algebraic Skill" or similar).

4. Sample papers be provided for 1.3 and all other externals.
5. Clarification be provided on what level the remaining externals are pitched at.

In summary we believe that it is a teacher's job to teach maths without worrying about assessments and it is NZQA's job to see how much the students have learnt.

I would be happy to work with NZQA to help remedy this situation.

Yours sincerely

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