

## Key messages: A to E reporting meeting 27 May 2006

Carol Taylor, Director, Assessment and Reporting, NSW Board of Studies, spoke and answered questions about the new reporting requirements. Here are some of the key messages:

1. All Australian school systems and sectors have accepted the Australian Government's requirement as part of their funding agreements to report an A to E grade on students' reports.
2. Different states and sectors have different meanings for their A to E grades.
3. In NSW, generic descriptors of student achievement, A to E, are to be used across Years 1-10.
4. These generic descriptors have been defined by the NSW Board of Studies and a separate set of School Certificate descriptors for each subject have been developed for Stage 5.
5. The A to E describe student achievement at a point in time and in relation to the work done in the period on which the report is based.
6. They describe the quality of student work done during the period which is being reported on. They are descriptions of performance.
7. They are NOT descriptions of student progression against the syllabus standard as was the case with working towards/working at/working beyond or some similar scale.
8. The A to E can be used at any time during a stage and describe the quality of student work for the reporting period. They are NOT end of stage descriptors only, but can be used at the end of a stage as well as during the stage.
9. To assist teachers understand the performance standards represented by the A to E descriptions, the Board of Studies is publishing some sample of student work on its website <http://arc.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/> These samples relate to particular tasks and are provided to help teachers develop a common understanding of what A, B, C, D and E work might look like within a subject and within a stage.
10. It will take some time, possibly several years, for teachers to come to a common understanding of these standards and many more work samples will be needed and progressively provided by the Board of Studies.
11. Teachers do NOT grade work samples. That grading is the job of the Board of Studies. Teachers make a holistic A to E judgement about the overall quality of a student's work at the time of reporting and in relation to the period being reported on.
12. Consistency of judgement will come as teachers engage the standards represented by the work samples and work collegially to discuss how students' work, the BOS work samples and the A to E descriptors align.

Some of the questions and discussion that followed focussed on different issues for primary and secondary schools related to assessment and the need to provide cohort information for parents. Many secondary schools indicated that they would include this information on their reports. Some suggestions were:

- a. Including the number of students who achieved each of the A to E grades
- b. Position in class or year group
- c. Quartiles, deciles and other fix percentage schemes

Primary teachers were less comfortable with these suggestions and preferred to have the information available to give to parents on request.

Some secondary teachers saw the possibility of using existing assessment policies that added assessment components and weighting to provide a rank order. Then

teachers could look at the ranking and find the student whose work demonstrated that they were at the cut-off points between an A and a B, etc and allocate grades accordingly. Some teachers had difficulty with standards referencing all the students and wanted incorrectly to allocate fixed percentages to the grades which would negate standards referencing.

The problem of students, mainly in English and mathematics, working out of their stage was discussed. It was recognised that learning in these subjects was sequential and hierarchical. Students who had not achieved the outcomes of the previous stage still needed to be engaged in the content of their current stage while remedial measures were taken. These students would still need an A to E based on the quality of work in the stage at the time of reporting.