

VCAA Consultation – Reporting on Literacy and Numeracy Attainment in Victorian Senior Secondary Qualifications

Submission of the Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania

1.0 Introductory Comment

The Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania (IEU) is pleased to provide a response to the VCAA consultation paper on reporting on literacy and numeracy attainment in Victorian senior secondary qualifications (VCE and VCAL).

The IEU has consulted with members in Catholic and independent secondary schools on the issues raised in the paper and consultation questions.

2.0 Key Issues

The consultation paper raises two key issues:

- (a) Should literacy and/or numeracy attainment levels of all Victorian senior secondary students be reported as part of senior secondary qualification; and
- (b) Should attainment of a minimum level of literacy and/or numeracy be a requirement for the awarding of a senior secondary qualification?

3.0 IEU Response

- (a) The IEU would be concerned about the introduction of any measure that would present either a perceived and/or experienced barrier to completion of senior secondary education and attainment of qualifications. The IEU agrees with a key premise presented in the consultation paper that a central consideration must be to determine whether new forms of reporting literacy and numeracy attainment levels as part of senior secondary qualification will improve outcomes for Victorian students.
- (b) In particular, the IEU would be opposed to the withholding of VCAL or VCE credentials on the basis of a student not attaining a minimum threshold standard of literacy and numeracy
- (c) The IEU is not convinced that additional assessment and/or reporting of literacy and/or numeracy will improve outcomes nor provide further necessary information on students' learning achievements in their chosen learning pathway and subjects. The overriding response of members surveyed by the IEU is that there is sufficient information and associated confidence that can already be derived from student results achieved through current assessment processes, including the GAT.

The IEU concurs with the consultation paper's statement that there is a longstanding assumption that literacy and numeracy skills are already key components of the senior secondary curriculum in Victoria: English group subjects remain a compulsory requirement of the VCE and play an important role as a proxy for literacy capabilities; close to 95% of VCE students undertake at least one unit of Mathematics and the VCAL requires students to complete compulsory literacy and numeracy units.

IEU members surveyed expressed confidence in the current assessment and reporting system, concurring that on completion of both the VCE and VCAL, students receive a senior certificate that is tied to satisfactory completion of certificate units, which requires the demonstration and utilisation of an adequate level of literacy and, where relevant, numeracy.

- (d) The IEU believes that Victoria's senior secondary qualifications are held in high esteem and contain adequate information on a student's achievements, as appropriate to the integrity and nature of the course of study undertaken by the student.
- (e) There was very little support for a bespoke externally assessed test mandatory for either/both VCE and VCAL students. IEU members expressed specific concern about undue and unnecessary weight placed on achievement in a one-off test. They saw this as a serious disadvantage to students from already disadvantaged groups, as well as an undermining of the integrity and value of the broader assessment methodology currently in use.
- (f) The IEU is also concerned that the introduction of additional assessment and reporting may well act as a disincentive for some young people and further disenfranchise vulnerable groups from participation in and completion of senior studies.

4.0 Further Consultation

If there was a political decision to introduce a form of separate and additional reporting of literacy and numeracy, IEU strongly believes that there must be further wide consultation on the specifics of such a reporting scheme, not simply a reliance on this first consultation process.