

# NSW Secondary Principals' Council



## **Assessment and Reporting Position Paper** **Author: Assessment and Reporting Reference Group**

**Date Ratified: 30 May 2024**

### **Rationale**

This Position Paper presents an agreed NSW Secondary Principals Council (NSWSPC) statement of position and recommendations about Assessment and Reporting in schools with Secondary Enrolments. The Position Paper identifies areas requiring action by the NSW Department of Education (DoE) and New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA).

The NSWSPC is committed to participate in meaningful consultation with the NSW Department of Education, ACARA, NESA, and other education bodies to achieve these recommendations, to build consistent and equitable structures, including quality resources across NSW Department of Education schools with a secondary enrolment.

This can be achieved by:

- Respecting the professional knowledge and expertise of NSWSPC to provide consistent workable solutions.
- Expert guidance to schools to implement assessment and reporting policy and practice.
- Provision of resources and professional learning that supports consistent teacher judgement and effective assessment practice.
- Re-imagining assessment and reporting informed by current research in a time of curriculum reform.

The New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) believes that comprehensive research based best practice evaluation of student progress through effective assessment and reporting is a vital and evolving component of pedagogical practice to ensure that every student's journey is supported and guided. Consistent and high-impact, system-wide assessment practices support instructional practice and leadership.

The NSW SPC position is to provide expert advice to enable an assessment and reporting system focused on student learning and growth, equitable, inclusive and supports diverse learners' needs.

Assessment and reporting provide timely and actionable feedback to students, teachers, and families. This aligns with the following:



- The NESA K-10 Curriculum states that assessment must, *'engage and challenge all students to maximise their individual talents and capabilities for lifelong learning'*
- *'The one fundamental purpose of assessment in education is to establish and understand where learners are in an aspect of their learning at this point in time.'* Masters (2014, 2017)
- *The Assessment Theme, 2020 espouses that teaching can be differentiated and further learning improvements can be monitored over time.'* CESE - What Works Best
- *'High quality student assessment supports teachers to monitor student progress and inform next steps, determine the effectiveness of chosen teaching strategies – both for learning and engagement – and to measure student understanding of a unit of work.'* (Stronge 2002)
- *Reporting in education must be both purposeful and accountable in communicating and conveying information about the student's academic progress, achievements, and areas for improvement to various stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents and carers. (incorporating DoE Policy Standards, 2023)*
- *In schools that excel, consistent school-wide practices for assessment are used to monitor, plan and report on student learning across the curriculum. Formative assessment is integrated into teaching practice in every classroom, confirming that students learn what is taught. School Excellence Framework*

## Statement of Principles

The NSW Secondary Principal Council recognises that quality assessment practices in schools are multifaceted and multipurpose and:

- Are integral to a learner's growth and future aspirations and addresses diversity of student learning.
- Measure the acquired knowledge or skills of the learner, identifies the strengths and weaknesses and allows for targeted interventions and improvements.
- Improves teaching and learning, by providing feedback to teachers about what is being learned and how it can be improved.
- Acknowledge that school-based assessments address specific learning contexts and needs.
- Ensure standardised testing, including NAPLAN, Higher School Certificate Examination and HSC Minimum Standards serve teaching and learning.
- Reporting is the communication of learning to parents twice per year in line with Commonwealth requirements.

## Recommendations:

NSW SPC recommends to the NSW Department of Education, ACARA and NESA that they:

- Acknowledge and seek the expertise of NSWSPC representatives, the reference group and executive, to provide advice and feedback in any decision making to shape quality assessment and reporting practices for our schools.
- Provide access for NSW teachers to quality assessment and reporting resources to sample and facilitate consistent practice within and between schools. NSW teachers are provided with quality assessment task samples which model best practice. To facilitate consistent practice in and between schools, these samples should be quality assured and stored in a single repository.
- Provide professional learning to support high quality assessment practices developed through collaboration between expert teachers, NESA Assessment Management division, the HSC Strategy and be available through MyPL with hours which contribute to accreditation.
- Encourage schools to design flexible assessment practice to measure various capabilities and aspirations, consistent with The Alice Springs ([Mparntwe](#)) Declaration.
- Allow the continual evolution of assessment principles to suit student needs in a world of change.
- Work towards development of credentials outside NESA for alternate school developed pathways to recognize diverse learners in the context of real-world problems and solutions.
- Develop quality professional learning and resource access around consistency of teacher Judgement in assessment.

## Standardised Tests

Standardised Tests have a role in education and system accountability. Tests must:

- Be fit for purpose considering and addressing factors of equity, accountability, and comparability.
- Be dependent on adequate 'fit for purpose' technology and resourcing to ensure equity for all schools.
- Provide meaningful data that enhances student learning outcomes and school decision making.
- Not increase the administration burden in schools. An allowance for a test administration position in schools should be included in the Award.

## Online Assessment

As the use of online platforms are increasingly used for assessments the department:

- needs to fully resource online tests and their infrastructure, including a TSO in all schools with secondary enrolments.
- Ensure universal and consistent access to technology, to avoid perpetuating socioeconomic disadvantage.
- Ensure statewide infrastructure to facilitate accessibility, security, and technology infrastructure for cohorts of all sizes and contexts.



- Review and provide clear, ethical, and consistent guidance regarding online assessment submissions to ensure consistent practice across the state and maintain their relevance in the evolving world of artificial intelligence.

## Reporting

Beyond legislative obligations, the NSWSPC supports a framework of best practice principles that allow schools to design reporting in collaboration with their community, that supports a student's learning pathway in context. These principles include.

- The NSWSPC supports the provision of plain English outcome statements for clear communication on student progress to parents.
- The A-E grade scale is supported with resources, to report and facilitate consistent teacher judgment, and aligns to the NESA performance descriptors.
- Clarity and Comprehensibility: Reports should be clear and easy to understand for students and parents.
- Detail and Specificity: Reports should include information about what the student has learned, the skills they have developed, and areas that require further improvement.
- Consistency: Use consistent criteria for reporting on students. This may include VET competency, Literacy/Numeracy progressions or other valid internal and external standards.
- Multiple Measures: Schools use various assessment methods to provide a comprehensive view of a student's performance. Ensure that reporting practices accommodate students with diverse needs, including those with disabilities or those who are English language learners.
- Digital Tools and Platforms: Leveraging technology to make reports more accessible and engaging. Digital platforms also facilitate more frequent updates and interactions with parents.

## NSWSPC Position:

The NSWSPC is committed to participating in meaningful consultation with the Department and other organisations to achieve these recommendations and thereby build assessment and reporting capacity in NSW secondary schools.

## Ratified at the SPC Term 2 State Assembly on 31 May 2024

