

## SECTION 9: THE MARKS ADJUSTMENT PROCESS FOR THE WACE COURSE SCORE AND TERTIARY ENTRANCE RANK

The mark students receive for each Stage 2 or Stage 3 course or E code TEE subject comes from two sources; their numerical school assessment (school mark) and their mark from the external examinations set by the Curriculum Council (examination mark).

Throughout Year 12, teachers collect information on student achievement in a range of assessment tasks including tests, class work, research assignments, practical work and semester examinations. At the end of the year they use this information to summarise the school performance of each student in each course unit or subject they have studied. For each Stage 2 or Stage 3 course or E code TEE subject studied by a student in their final year of senior secondary schooling, the school submits to the Curriculum Council:

- a grade (A, B, C, D, or E), **and**
- a numerical school assessment (school mark).

School marks are used in the calculation of the WACE course score and the scaled score used for university admission.

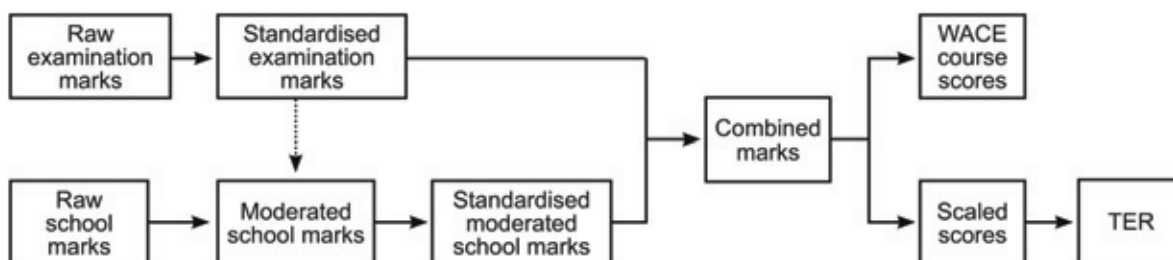
### 9.1 Why adjust students' marks?

In Western Australia there are about 230 schools offering a variety of Curriculum Council courses and subjects. Students can choose to do any combination of these subjects and courses. This variety of choices makes it difficult to compare the results of all students in all the schools and all the courses and subjects across the State.

Comparing marks is not dissimilar to comparing currencies. It is not possible to compare the value of '50' Singapore dollars with '50' Hong Kong dollars without a conversion of one to the other, or both to a common currency such as the Australian dollar. Similarly, for any given calendar year, it is not possible to compare:

- a school mark of 80 in Art at one school with a mark of 80 in Art at another school
- a school mark of 80 in Art at one school with a mark of 80 in Calculus at the same or a different school
- an examination mark of 80 in Art with an examination mark of 80 in Calculus
- school or examination marks from different calendar years.

The following flow diagram summarises the marks adjustment processes used by the Curriculum Council and the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC). Each of these processes is briefly described in this section. A more complete explanation is available on the Curriculum Council website at [http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/Senior\\_Secondary/Exam\\_Information/Your\\_Marks/](http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/Senior_Secondary/Exam_Information/Your_Marks/).



Information about calculating the tertiary entrance rank (TER) and all other aspects of university admission is available on the TISC website at [www.tisc.edu.au](http://www.tisc.edu.au).

## 9.2 Standardisation, moderation and scaling

Standardisation and moderation are processes that the Curriculum Council uses to enable school marks and external examination marks to be combined so that students' results can be fairly compared. Scaling is a process jointly undertaken by the Council and TISC to enable fair comparison between courses/subjects. These processes bring students' marks onto a common scale which enables the universities to compare student performance, even if students have done different courses and subjects at different schools in different calendar years.

### 9.2.1 Standardising the raw examination mark

The overall mark for the examination (including the practical component, where applicable) is called the raw examination mark. The raw examination is standardised. This process is undertaken because examination papers for individual courses and subjects vary in difficulty from year to year, and from course/subject to course/subject. Standardisation adjusts for these differences in difficulty.

Standardisation ensures that no student is disadvantaged if an examination is harder than usual in the year they do their examination. If an examination is harder, the student's standardised mark in that course/subject may be higher than their raw mark. If, on the other hand, an examination is easier than usual, their standardised mark may be lower than their raw examination mark.

As a result of standardisation:

- the distribution of standardised marks is the same from year to year and from course/subject to course/subject
- the top student in each course or subject is given a standardised mark of 100.

### 9.2.2 The moderated school mark

A moderated school mark is calculated from the raw school mark. This moderated school mark is on the same numerical scale as the standardised examination marks and, therefore, has the same meaning in every school. Standardised examination marks are used as a common scale because the examination is the same for all students from all schools, unlike the scale of school marks, which is different between schools.

The ranking of students according to the moderated school marks is the same as their ranking according to raw school marks.

The moderated school mark is likely to be different from a student's school mark. The bigger the difference, the bigger the gap was between the scale used by their teacher when marking the assessment tasks and the scale used for the standardised examination marks for the course or subject.

### 9.2.3 Standardising the school mark

The moderated school mark is also standardised using the same process as is used to standardise the raw examination mark (see above).

### 9.2.4 The combined mark

The standardised examination mark and standardised moderated school mark for the same course or subject (which are both out of 100) are then averaged to calculate a combined mark. Combined marks are then used to determine the WACE course scores and scaled scores.

### 9.2.5 The WACE course score

In 2009, for each of the 21 courses with an external examination, students who complete one or more Stage 2 and/or Stage 3 pairs of units and the associated external examination will receive a WACE course report. From (and including) 2010, when all new courses will be examined, all Year 12 students will receive a WACE course report for each Stage 2 and/or Stage 3 pair of units studied, provided they complete the external examination.

A standards-setting panel, comprising experienced teachers who have marked the examination papers, will review students' examination scripts and decide which ones demonstrate excellent, high, satisfactory, limited or inadequate achievement. The initial cut-points in the raw examination marks scale for these achievement bands are identified by taking the proportion of candidates, across the State, who have been awarded school-based A, B, C, D and E grade averages for the pair of units studied.

The panel then determines whether teachers' judgements (from the school-based grades) were too lenient, appropriate or too harsh. If the panel considers the teachers' judgements were too lenient (i.e. awarded more A's than the examination scripts suggest), then the scripts above the initial cut-point are inspected and the final cut-point is determined. If the standard is appropriate, that cut-point is retained as the final cut-point. If the teachers' judgements were too harsh (i.e. awarded fewer A's than the examination scripts suggest), then the scripts below the initial cut-point are inspected and the final cut-point is determined.

The final cut-points are transferred to the combined marks scale and then mapped onto the WACE course score scale so that a WACE course score of:

- 75 and above represents excellent achievement
- 65–74 represents high achievement
- 50–64 represents satisfactory achievement
- 35–49 represents limited achievement
- less than 35 represents inadequate achievement.

The cut-points for these achievement bands will be the same irrespective of the course or whether the pair of units examined is at Stage 2 or Stage 3. All WACE course scores are expressed in terms of this scale.

The proportion of students in each achievement band will vary from course to course and stage to stage. It may also vary from year to year depending on the overall performance of students in a particular year.

The WACE course report shows how the student performed:

- relative to the course standards (i.e. 69 represents high achievement for that pair of units)
- relative to all other students who completed and sat the examination in that pair of units (represented by a location on the graph).

The report also shows the:

- the grades achieved in each of the pair of units studied
- the school mark and examination mark achieved
- separate practical and written marks (for courses with a separate practical examination)
- the number of students who received a WACE course score for that pair of units.

A sample WACE course report for a student completing Visual Arts Stage 3 is provided on the next page.

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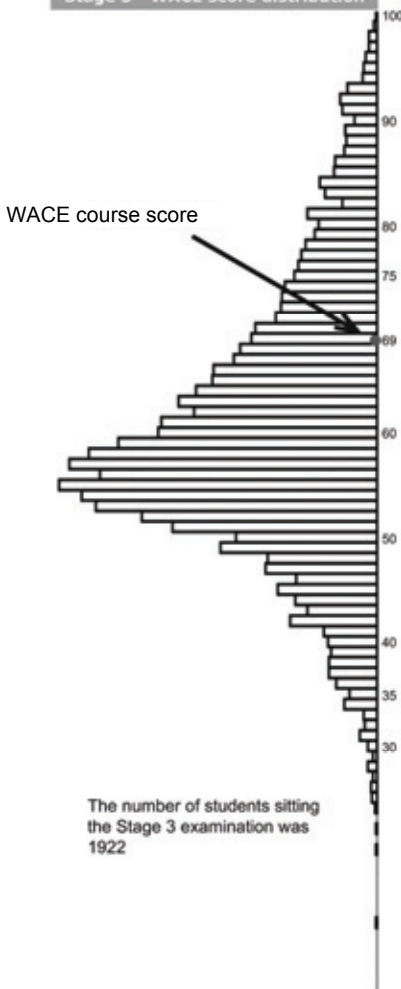
Jane Frances Student  
123 Sample Street  
SAMPLETON WA 6234

**Course Report: Visual Arts (Stage 3)**

Student Identifier: 15468599/4165  
Date of Issue: 27 December 2009  
Page: 1 of 1

WACE course score	69	School grades	Unit 3A	B	Unit 3B	A
<b>School marks</b>	<b>Raw</b>	<b>Moderated</b>	<b>Examination marks</b>		<b>Raw</b>	<b>Standardised</b>
Written (50%)	41	39	Written (50%)		31	32
Practical (50%)	37	35	Practical (50%)		37	32
<b>Total (100%)</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>Total (100%)</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>64</b>

Stage 3 - WACE score distribution      Stage 3 course achievement: the student demonstrated the following in the exam:



- Submitted artwork demonstrates a distinctive style, outstanding use of materials and techniques, a high level of discernment and sophisticated use of visual language; and Provides a comprehensive analysis of artwork that fluently discusses complex ideas, makes connections, interprets meaning and draws insightful conclusions that are well-supported with evidence and extensive research.
- **Submitted artwork is well-executed demonstrating controlled use of materials, carefully applied techniques and highly considered use of visual language; and Provides a detailed analysis of artwork that explains how artworks have been constructed to communicate meaning and is able to support conclusions with contextual information.**
- Submitted artwork demonstrates competent use of materials and techniques and Satisfactory application of visual language; and Provides a broad, descriptive analysis of artwork that identifies the main features, makes simple observations and draws general conclusions.
- Submitted artwork demonstrated basic use of materials and techniques and limited application of visual language; and Provides a basic analysis of artwork that describes some of the obvious features and is reliant almost completely on a personal point of view.
- Submitted artwork demonstrates inappropriate or minimal use of materials and techniques and ineffective use of visual language; and Provides a minimal or superficial analysis of artwork with little or no interpretation of meaning.

**Explanation of different stage units**  
 Stage 3 units are typically the most conceptually demanding requirement for post-school destinations: university, TAFE and other training providers, apprenticeships and workplace.  
 Stage 2 units are typically required for post-school destinations: TAFE and other training providers, apprenticeships, traineeships, university and workplace.  
 Stage 1 units are typically required for post-school destinations: TAFE and other training providers, traineeships and workplace.  
 Stage 'P' units are typically required for developing skills for leaving school or transition to Stage 1 units.  
 See overleaf for further details.

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### 9.2.6 The scaled score

Scaling adjusts for differences in difficulty between courses/subjects and aims to ensure that students are not disadvantaged if they choose a difficult course or subject. The Council and TISC apply the average marks scaling (AMS) method to the combined mark. This method uses the overall achievements of the group of students studying each course or subject to adjust the combined marks of the course or subject into 'scaled' scores. Because scaled scores are on a common scale they can be combined to determine the tertiary entrance score, and hence the tertiary entrance aggregate (TEA) and the tertiary entrance rank (TER).

For example, if the Ancient History students, as a group, perform better across all their courses/subjects than students of Accounting, the marks in Ancient History will be scaled up relative to the marks in Accounting.

The scaled score for a course or subject is likely to be different from the school mark and the combined marks.

Information about calculating the TEA and TER is available on the TISC website at [www.tisc.edu.au](http://www.tisc.edu.au).