

## External Assessment

External assessments are set, administered and marked independently of schools by the Curriculum Council. Traditionally, external assessments have been referred to external examinations.

External assessments provide an independent measure of student achievement on those parts of the syllabus that can be validly and reliably measured in an external assessment or examination setting.

All new courses, except Workplace Learning, will have Stage 2 and Stage 3 examinations. From 2009, all students who study courses at Stage 2 or Stage 3 must sit an external assessment at the end of Year 12, unless they are exempt.

External assessment strengthens and adds credibility to school-based assessment by providing a public component for all students.

Practical and written external assessments will be conducted in courses with a significant practical component. The practical examination may be performance-based for courses such as Dance or production-based in courses such as Visual Arts.

### Use of external assessments

- external assessments provide a means by which school numerical assessments may be adjusted so they are compatible across schools
- a student's final combined score in a course can be reported as the WACE score that shows how the student performed against the standard for the pair of units studied and relative to other students state wide
- the final combined score can also be scaled against other course scores and used for university selection
- the scores can also assist in the selection of top students for exhibitions and awards.

### Case for and against school-based and external assessment

The following table summarises the relative strengths and drawbacks of school-based and external assessments.

School-based assessment	External assessment
<b>Strengths</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• based on a substantial sample of student performance, over time and over the full range of the syllabus requirements</li> <li>• can assess aspects of a course not amenable to external examination</li> <li>• can contribute to the learning process in a more natural manner as the assessment occurs throughout the course</li> <li>• provides motivation for students to work continuously throughout the course</li> <li>• can accommodate different learning styles of students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides an objective assessment of a student's performance independent of the students' personal relations with the teacher or the school attended</li> <li>• defines common standards of performance required against a syllabus</li> <li>• provides a basis for fair comparison of students between schools</li> <li>• enables provision of detailed diagnostic analysis and feedback to schools</li> <li>• helps assure syllabus coverage</li> <li>• assures authenticity of the student's own work</li> <li>• provides a clear end-point, enhancing motivation and providing a clear target</li> </ul>

School-based assessment	External assessment
<b>Weaknesses</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may be biased for or against a student by the relationship between teacher and student</li> <li>• can, in some cases, take undue account of early performance in a course and disadvantage those who are 'late bloomers'</li> <li>• can change the relationship between teacher and student by casting the teacher in the role of judge instead of that of a supported in the preparation for external assessment</li> <li>• difficult to ensure authenticity of some student work</li> <li>• can be undertaken with variable criteria from school to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can cover only limited sample of the syllabus within the time available</li> <li>• can capture only a small sample of student performance, even on the topics tested, within the three hours</li> <li>• can be biased against students who do not perform well under the unique pressure of an examination of who are not well on the day or whose examinations are concentrated in a limited period</li> <li>• may encourage a concentration in teaching on those aspects of a course which are most readily assessed by an external examination</li> <li>• may encourage short-term, rote learning</li> </ul>

The new system continues to value school-based assessment through the awarding of school-based grades, while at the same time introduces external assessments in all courses that significantly strengthen standards-referenced assessment and reporting at the Year 12 level. This approach builds on the strengths of both and helps minimise their negative impact.