



BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

Guide to the 2009 School Certificate

RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

© Board of Studies NSW 2009

Published by
Board of Studies NSW
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Sydney NSW 2001
Australia

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www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au

ISBN 978 174147 9737

February 2009

2009061

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Requirements for award of the School Certificate

The School Certificate is generally awarded to eligible students after four years of secondary school (Years 7–10) who have satisfactorily completed the courses required by the Board of Studies.

Your School Certificate assessment combines school-based assessment of your overall achievement in each course with statewide tests that assess your foundation knowledge and skills in key areas of the curriculum.

The School Certificate prepares you for success in HSC study, training and apprenticeships or in the workplace. It provides you, your parents, employers and the general community with a detailed picture of your strengths and achievements at the end of the compulsory years of schooling.

If you are undertaking the School Certificate this year, it is important that you read the following information carefully.

Eligibility requirements

To be eligible for the award of the School Certificate, you are required to:

- attend a school recognised by the Board of Studies
- satisfactorily complete a Board approved program of study, and show satisfactory effort
- make a serious attempt at the School Certificate tests in English-literacy, Mathematics, Science, Australian History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, and Computing Skills
- attend school until the final day of Year 10.

Course requirements

Over the four years leading up to the School Certificate, you need to complete the following requirements:

English – studied substantially in each of Years 7–10 with 400 hours to be completed by the end of Year 10.

Mathematics – studied substantially in each of Years 7–10 with 400 hours to be completed by the end of Year 10.

Science – studied substantially in each of Years 7–10 with 400 hours to be completed by the end of Year 10.

Human Society and Its Environment – studied substantially in each of Years 7–10 with 400 hours to be completed by the end of Year 10.

Included in this requirement is the study of 100 hours each of History and Geography in Years 7–8 and 100 hours each of Australian History and Australian Geography in Years 9–10.

Creative Arts – studied for 200 hours and comprising 100 hours in each of Visual Arts and Music.

Technological and Applied Studies – studied for 200 hours and consisting of the Technology (Mandatory) Years 7–8 Syllabus.

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education – studied in each of Years 7–10 with 300 hours to be completed by the end of Year 10.

Languages – studied for 100 hours, to be completed in one language over one continuous 12-month period between Years 7 and 10 but preferably in Years 7–8.

If you think you will not meet these requirements by the end of Year 10, you should speak to your School Certificate coordinator or your principal.

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In addition to these mandatory requirements, there is a range of elective Board developed or approved courses available for study in Years 9 and 10. You can get information about elective courses from your school.

Entry procedures

Your school will complete a School Certificate entry for you and lodge it with the Board of Studies in Term 1.

By the end of Term 1 you will receive a Confirmation of Entry notice. You should carefully check the details to ensure that they are correct, including the spelling of your name and the courses for which you are entered.

Any changes to your entry must be notified to your school immediately so that the school can inform the Board.

You will be required to sign the Confirmation of Entry when it is correct.

Course attendance

Absence during the year

Principals may grant students leave for legitimate reasons such as illness, physical injury or holidays. If you have been granted leave during the year there will be no effect on your course completion requirements provided that you have completed compensatory assignments during the period of absence or have been able to catch up on missed work on your return to school.

If your absence is prolonged and work is not possible during the period, the principal may judge that it is not feasible for you to make up the work during the year.

Any extensive period of unexplained absence may result in non-completion of a course(s) and may impact on your eligibility for the award of the School Certificate.

Approved student exchange

The principal may grant leave for approved student exchange programs. If you are absent from the School Certificate tests as a result of being on an approved exchange, you may retain eligibility for the award of the School Certificate but you will not receive test results. Your school must advise the Board of your approved exchange.

If you wish to undertake the School Certificate tests overseas or interstate, you must apply to the Office of the Board of Studies through your principal. Approval is only given in the most exceptional circumstances.

If you are undertaking the tests overseas or interstate you must meet all the costs associated with the conduct and administration of the tests.

Final date for attendance

It is a requirement for the award of the School Certificate that Year 10 students attend school until the final day of Year 10 as determined by the school system or principal, unless an exemption has been granted by the principal.

If you leave before the last day of Year 10 without an exemption or approval, you will not be awarded a School Certificate. However, if you have sat the School Certificate tests, you will receive a Record of Achievement. Unauthorised early departure from school in Year 10 may also jeopardise your entry into Preliminary and HSC courses in Years 11 and 12.

Satisfactory course completion requirements

For the satisfactory completion of a course, it is your responsibility to:

- (a) follow the course developed or endorsed by the Board; and
- (b) apply yourself with diligence and sustained effort to the set tasks and experiences provided in the course by the school; and
- (c) achieve some or all of the course outcomes.

Satisfactory completion of courses is judged, among other things, by your attendance and level of involvement in class, the assignments, homework, etc completed and your level of achievement.

If the principal determines that you are in danger of not completing a course satisfactorily, you will be warned in writing in time for you to correct the problem and satisfactorily complete the course.

If you are deemed not to have completed a course, you will receive an 'N' determination. The course will be listed as 'Not Completed' on your Record of Achievement, and this may mean that you are not eligible for the award of a School Certificate in that year.

You have the right to appeal against an 'N' determination. The appropriate form can be obtained from your principal. Appeals against 'N' determinations should be lodged with your principal, who will advise you of the date by which your appeal must be submitted. If you are dissatisfied with the result of the school review of your appeal, you should advise the principal that you wish the appeal to be referred to the Board of Studies.

Flexible progression

The principal may approve your acceleration in one or more courses, or in all courses. Details of eligibility, requirements and procedures relating to accelerated progression are set out in the Board's Assessment, Certification and Examination (ACE) Manual and in the Board publication Guidelines for Accelerated Progression. Both documents can be accessed via the Board's website at www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au

You should consult your principal on all matters concerning an accelerated program of study.

You may accumulate courses towards the School Certificate and receive an annual Record of Achievement showing all Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10) courses completed, and results of tests completed. On completion of all School Certificate requirements, you will be awarded a School Certificate and Record of Achievement.

School Certificate grades

At the end of Year 10, your achievement for each course you have studied in Years 9 and 10 will be reported as a grade from A to E. In Mathematics, the grades have been further differentiated to nine levels: A10, A9, B8, B7, C6, C5, D4, D3, E2. The grade you receive is determined by your school, based on your performance in the course throughout the year.

The table below shows the common grade scale, which describes performance at each of the grade levels A to E.

For each course, a set of Course Performance Descriptors has been developed based on the common grade

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scale. Each descriptor is a positive statement about achievement related to the knowledge and skills relevant to the course. You can view the Course Performance Descriptors for each course and samples of student work on the Assessment Resource Centre of the Board's website at arc.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/go/sc

Teachers will collect assessment information about your achievements in a course and relate it to the Course

Performance Descriptors. This information will assist the school in making the final judgement of the grade to award you at the end of Year 10.

No grades will be awarded for courses based on Life Skills outcomes and content. These are reported as 'Completed' on the Record of Achievement and through the achievement of outcomes listed on the Profile of Student Achievement (see page 16).

The common grade scale

A	The student has an extensive knowledge and understanding of the content and can readily apply this knowledge. In addition, the student has achieved a very high level of competence in the processes and skills and can apply these skills to new situations.
B	The student has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the content and a high level of competence in the processes and skills. In addition, the student is able to apply this knowledge and these skills to most situations.
C	The student has a sound knowledge and understanding of the main areas of content and has achieved an adequate level of competence in the processes and skills.
D	The student has a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and has achieved a limited level of competence in the processes and skills.
E	The student has an elementary knowledge and understanding in few areas of the content and has achieved very limited competence in some of the processes and skills.

The School Certificate tests

In November, you are required to sit for the School Certificate tests in English-literacy, Mathematics, Science, Australian History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Computing Skills.

English-literacy

The English-literacy test is of two hours duration plus 10 minutes reading time. The test consists of two sections.

Section 1 (60 marks) consists of Reading/viewing tasks – suggested time 1 hour and 20 minutes. This section is divided into:

- multiple-choice questions (45 marks)
- short-response questions (15 marks).

Reading/viewing tasks require students to respond to a range of texts including printed visual text. There could be four to five texts selected from the suggested contexts of everyday communication (including factual and non-literary texts), literature and media (including multimedia).

Section 2 (30 marks) consists of two writing tasks – a written response (10 marks) and an extended written response (20 marks). Suggested time 40 minutes.

The writing tasks in Section 2 require students to read or view texts and respond to them in writing.

Mathematics

The Mathematics test is of two hours duration plus 5 minutes reading time. The test consists of two sections.

Section 1 (25 marks) – duration 30 minutes.

All questions in Section 1 are short-response questions worth one mark each (25 marks). The use of calculators is not allowed in this section of the test.

Section 2 (75 marks) – duration 1 hour and 30 minutes. Calculators may be used in this section (see page 13).

This section consists of two parts:

- Part A (55 marks) is made up of objective response questions worth one mark each.
- Part B (20 marks) consists of four questions worth five marks each. All questions are in short-response format.

Science

The Science test is of two hours duration plus 10 minutes reading time.

The test consists of two sections. Questions may be based on stimulus material. When stimulus material is used, one or more questions may draw on that material.

Section 1 (60 marks) consists of Parts A and B:

- Part A (50 marks) consists of 50 multiple-choice questions worth one mark each.
- Part B (10 marks) consists of 10 questions mostly requiring a single word or number response.

Section 2 (40 marks) consists of 5–8 short-response questions of varying mark value. These questions may consist of several parts.

Australian History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship

The Australian History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship test is of two hours duration plus 10 minutes reading time.

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The test consists of two sections:

Section 1 Australian Geography, Civics and Citizenship

Section 2 Australian History, Civics and Citizenship.

Each section is worth 50 marks and contains 20 multiple-choice questions (20 marks), and 3–4 short-response questions and one extended-response question (30 marks).

In the Australian Geography, Civics and Citizenship section of the test, questions will be drawn from:

- Focus Area 5A3: Issues in Australian Environments
- Focus Area 5A4: Australia in Its Regional and Global Contexts
- Geographical Tools and Skills (syllabus pages 18–21).

In the Australian History, Civics and Citizenship section of the test, questions will be drawn from the following sections of the syllabus:

- Topic 5: Australia in the Vietnam War Era
- Topic 6: Changing Rights and Freedoms
- Topic 7: People Power and Politics in the Post-war Period
- Topic 8: Australia's Social and Cultural History in the Post-war Period
- Historical Skills (syllabus page 16) and
- the Working Historically sections of each of Topics 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Both sections of the test include questions that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge about, and understanding of civics and citizenship.

Computing Skills

The Computing Skills test is of one hour and 15 minutes duration and consists of 100 multiple-choice questions.

There will be 20 questions in each of the five skill areas:

1. computer operations
2. word-processing skills
3. spreadsheet and database skills
4. graphics and multimedia skills
5. internet and email skills.

The test will generally be undertaken online.

Special examination provisions

Special examination provisions for the School Certificate tests, such as writers or large print test papers, are available to students who are eligible under Board of Studies' criteria. If you wish to apply for special examination provisions you should ask your principal, Year 10 adviser or school counsellor immediately.

Applications for special examination provisions close on 9 April 2009.

If your application is declined you may appeal to the Board through your school with new evidence. Late applications will only be considered if your special examination need occurs or becomes known after the closing date.

School Certificate test procedures

Read this information about the School Certificate tests now, and read it again before you sit the tests. If you are unsure or have any questions about the tests or the rules for being awarded a School Certificate or Record of Achievement, ask your teachers.

Dates

The School Certificate tests will be conducted on:

Monday 9 November

English-literacy
Science

Tuesday 10 November

Mathematics
Australian History, Geography,
Civics and Citizenship

Wednesday 11 November–Friday 13 November

Computing Skills

Your school will advise you of the exact times for the tests.

Attendance at tests

You must attend the School Certificate tests. If you are not able to sit for the tests due to illness or misadventure, you must tell your principal immediately.

Your principal will ask you to complete a School Certificate Test Illness/Misadventure Appeal form and will decide whether your explanation is satisfactory (see page 14). If your explanation is not satisfactory, you will not be given a result in any of the tests that you missed, and you will not be awarded a School Certificate that year.

Be on time

You should be waiting outside the test room at least 15 minutes before the test begins. If you are late for the test, you will still be allowed to do the test but you will not be given any extra time unless the lateness was outside your control. (For example, if the school bus broke down or the roads were flooded, you may be given the full test time.)

Your student number

All Year 10 students are given a student number. This number is on the Confirmation of Entry notice, which you will be given at school.

Your student number and centre number will be printed on all answer sheets that will be on your table in the test room.

You must write your student number and your centre number on all test papers on which you write answers.

If you are sitting for the online form of the Computing Skills test, you will need your student number to log in to the test. You will also need to type your password for the test. You will be given your password by the test supervisor on the day of the test.

Conduct during the test

You will be reported to the Board and may be removed from the test room if you do not follow the rules outlined below.

Penalties for such actions may involve cancellation of that particular test result or of the School Certificate award.

(i) You must:

- (a) follow the day-to-day rules of the school or college where you sit for your tests
- (b) follow the supervisors' instructions at all times
- (c) behave in a polite and courteous manner towards the supervisors and other students
- (d) make a serious attempt at answering all the questions in the test
- (e) place any watch on top of your desk where it can be seen by a supervisor
- (f) stop writing when instructed to by the supervisor.

(ii) You must not:

- (a) take a mobile phone into the test room
- (b) eat in the test room except as approved by the Board of Studies
- (c) speak to any person other than a supervisor during a test
- (d) behave in any way likely to disturb the work of any other student or upset the conduct of a test

- (e) attend a test while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs
- (f) take into the test room any books, notes, paper or any equipment other than the equipment allowed
- (g) take any electronic device such as an organiser, dictionary or computerised watch into the test room unless approved by the Board of Studies
- (h) leave the test room until one hour of the test time has elapsed (except in emergencies, and then only in the company of a supervisor)
- (i) remove any test material from the test room
- (j) write before being instructed by the supervisor to do so
- (k) copy someone else's work during a test, or cheat in any other way.

Supervisors of Marking will bring to the Board's attention test answers that contain frivolous or objectionable material, or students who have not made a genuine attempt at answering the test questions. In such instances, a student's result in that test may be cancelled and he/she may not be eligible for the School Certificate award.

The Board of Studies and its employees will not be responsible for the safe-keeping of any items left in or around the test room. This includes mobile telephones and other unauthorised material or equipment.

What to take into the test room

For all tests:

- pens (black is recommended)
- pencils and erasers
- a ruler marked in millimetres and centimetres
- highlighter pens (optional).

You should use a black pen when answering multiple-choice questions or other questions on scanned answer sheets, and questions requiring a written response.

Additional equipment for the Mathematics,

Science and Australian History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship tests:

- a calculator*
- a pair of compasses
- a protractor
- a set square.

In the Mathematics test, you may use curve-drawing templates, provided that such templates contain no printed formulae other than equations of simple curves (such as $y = x^2$) that may be drawn using the template.

*Note:

- Students are permitted to use calculators, including graphics calculators, that are silent, hand-held and either battery or solar powered. Calculators that are capable of communicating or exchanging data may be taken into the examination room, but are not to be used for this purpose in the tests.

A calculating device that incorporates a set of keys whose primary function is to represent the alphabetic characters (eg a QWERTY keyboard) is not deemed to be a calculator for the purpose of these tests, and will not be allowed.

Calculators to be used by students in these tests must have been switched off and have had all storage facilities cleared before entry into the examination room.

Information on clearance of storage facilities is available on the Board's website at http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/calculators_hsc_gen_maths.html

- The Mathematics test consists of two sections. Calculators are not to be used in Section 1 of the test.

Before you start a written test

CHECK that your multiple-choice answer sheets show your name, student number and centre number.

CHECK that your test papers have the correct number of pages and that the pages are in the right number order.

CHECK that all diagrams and illustrations are clearly printed on your test paper.

WRITE your student number and centre number in the spaces provided on the test papers when your supervisor tells you to.

Instructions for the Computing Skills test will be given at the time that the test is conducted.

When you finish a written test

STOP writing as soon as you are told to do so.

STAY at your table until you are told you may leave.

GIVE all your answer pages to the supervisor.

LEAVE all the other question papers on your table. Do not take any papers out of the test room.

Instructions for the Computing Skills test will be given at the time that the test is conducted.

Illness/misadventure during the tests

If you are ill or experience misadventure during the tests, or if you are prevented from attending a test due to illness or misadventure, you may be eligible to submit an Illness/Misadventure appeal. This must be done on a School Certificate Test Illness/Misadventure Appeal form, available from your principal or Presiding Officer (the person who supervises the tests). Evidence of your illness/misadventure must be submitted with your appeal form.

If you cannot attend a test, it is essential that you advise your principal before the test. If you are ill or suffer misadventure prior to the test but you are still able to sit the test, please advise the Presiding Officer before the test. For illness or misadventure that occurs during a test, please notify the Presiding Officer at the time.

The Board has delegated to principals the authority to uphold or decline your Illness/Misadventure appeal. Should you wish to have a review of the principal's decision, you can appeal to the Board.

If your Illness/Misadventure appeal is upheld for a test, you will receive the higher of your test mark and an estimate determined by your school.

Please note that the Illness/ Misadventure appeals process does not cover:

- attendance at a sporting or cultural event, or family holiday;
- alleged inadequacies of teaching or long-term matters relating to loss of preparation time;
- long-term illnesses;

-
- the same grounds for which the Board has already granted special examination provisions, unless further difficulties are experienced during the test;
 - matters avoidable by the student (eg misreading of timetable).

School Certificate documentation

School Certificates and Records of Achievement will be available to eligible students through the school in December.

- Your School Certificate shows your name and school, and states that you have met all Board requirements.
- Your Record of Achievement is a cumulative record of all Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10) courses completed. It shows grades and hours of study for all the courses you have studied for at least 200 hours in Stage 5. It also lists those courses you have studied for 100 hours or more in Stage 5, provided that a 200-hour course has been recorded in a Key Learning Area other than English, Mathematics or Science. If you are eligible to receive a School Certificate, the statement 'Eligible for School Certificate' will be printed at the bottom of the Record of Achievement. You will also receive a statement on your Record of Achievement regarding satisfactory completion of the mandatory course requirements.

If you have been deemed unsatisfactory in a course, the words 'Not Completed' will be printed beside the course on your Record of Achievement.

- Your Record of Achievement also records the results you have achieved for the School Certificate tests.

If you find an error on your School Certificate or Record of Achievement (eg incorrect spelling of your name or a course not listed), you should ask your principal to arrange for a replacement certificate. Your name can only appear on the certificate in the same way as it appeared on the entry submitted by your school, and as verified on the Confirmation of Entry. Do not try to change any of the information yourself. Legal proceedings can be brought against anyone who tries to change any information on a School Certificate or Record of Achievement.

Appeals against grades

If you wish to appeal against the grade awarded by your school in a particular course, you must submit a written appeal together with evidence to the principal of your school. Your principal will advise you of the date by which your appeal is to be submitted. The school will review the grade you have been awarded and advise you of the result of the review.

If you are dissatisfied with the result of the school review, you should advise the principal that you wish the appeal to be referred to the Board of Studies.

Your application for a review/appeal should show that your grade in the course is not consistent with the reports given to you throughout the year by the school.

Students undertaking courses based on Life Skills outcomes and content

If you are undertaking one or more courses based on Life Skills outcomes and content and meet Board requirements, you will be awarded the School Certificate. Your Record of Achievement will list all courses satisfactorily completed, including courses based on Life Skills outcomes and content.

In addition, your school will provide you with a Profile of Student Achievement which lists the Life Skills outcomes achieved for each syllabus studied.

If you have studied the regular course(s) in English, Mathematics, Science, Australian History or Australian Geography, you are required to sit for the corresponding School Certificate test(s). Your test result(s) will be reported on your Record of Achievement. The Computing Skills test is optional for students undertaking any course(s) based on Life Skills outcomes and content.

Copyright

The Board of Studies publishes a range of materials based on the School Certificate tests that include samples of students' work. These publications are made available electronically or as books and are published solely for educational purposes.

Answers provided by students in their tests may be used by the Board of Studies in these publications. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the examination process, individual students will not be identified by name in the publications.