

Frequently Asked Questions about Blueprints

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Blueprints in general

1. *Are Blueprints year-level-specific?*

Each of the three current Blueprints (as of June 2006) was devised with a particular range of year levels in mind, corresponding to the three suites of Rich Tasks:

- Years 1–4 (Suite 1): *I Didn't Expect That!*
- Years 4–7 (Suite 2): *When Things Go Wrong*
- Years 7–10 (Suite 3): *Pictures at an Exhibition.*

Some teachers have seen potential in the Blueprints for implementation outside of these broad levels, and schools are certainly free to develop tasks from the Blueprints at whatever level they consider appropriate. The validation of standards in these tasks is likely to focus on the originally intended “suites”, but the implications for standards validation of implementing the Blueprints in more than one suite will be investigated.

2. *Why do the Blueprints always require group work?*

The three current Blueprints require group work. It is not envisaged that group work will be a feature of all future Blueprints. The fact that the current Blueprints do require group work, however, reflects their connectedness to the wider world: most complex, real-life endeavours require cooperative work in at least some of their phases.

Alignment

3. What processes do we follow to select the outcomes that match the Blueprint (alignment issues)?

Some of the curriculum intent of a Blueprint task is already implicit in the Blueprint itself: this is the “above the line” component, the things that any valid interpretation of the Blueprint will inevitably include. Teachers may want to audit this “above the line” curriculum intent with other ways of describing curriculum (for example, syllabus outcomes). In addition, it is inevitable (and desirable) that in developing their own task from a Blueprint teachers will include other curriculum elements (“below the line”) that are specific to their own task. Whether these “fall out of” the task the teachers develop or are deliberately selected from, say, the syllabus and then inserted, is up to the teachers. There is no one process that is prescribed.

4. How do Blueprints align with New Basics?

Blueprints emerged from the New Basics Rich Tasks. The New Basics curriculum organisers are one form of curriculum organiser that may be used in relation to Blueprint tasks. They are not the only one.

5. How do Blueprints align with KLAs?

The three currently developed Blueprints are (like the Rich Tasks) transdisciplinary; accordingly they depend upon more than one Key Learning Area. It is possible that Blueprints will be developed in future that relate more exclusively with particular KLAs.

QCAR

6. Are Blueprints part of QCAR? Is there a link? Are they part of the QCAR discourse?

QCAR is being developed within the Queensland Studies Authority for implementation across the various education sectors. Blueprints are a product of Education Queensland and are not part of the QSA development. However, the work that teachers put into developing and implementing tasks based on Blueprints should be of direct relevance to the stated aims of QCAR:

- Focusing learning and teaching on “the essentials”
- Building capacity in terms of robust assessment practices (including the development of a bank of high quality assessment tools)
- Referencing judgments about student work to standards
- Facilitating comparability of reported results state-wide
- Reporting against standards.

7. Where do “essential learnings” fit in?

Teachers developing tasks from the Blueprints would be well advised to consider carefully how the QCAR Essential Learnings (or parts of them) are dealt with in their tasks. This is not a special requirement for Blueprint tasks — presumably schools will do this kind of mapping for all their curriculum and assessment — but since Blueprints are so relevant to the stated aims of QCAR this sort of mapping would seem to be particularly important for Blueprint tasks. A computer-based tool for mapping the essentials against tasks (including Blueprint tasks) is available for downloading from the New Basics website:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/newbasics/>

8. Are Blueprints similar to the 4,6,9 CATs?

At time of writing, specifications for the CATs (QCAR’s Common Assessment Tasks) are not available, so a comparison cannot be made. No attempt has been made in developing the Blueprints to foreshadow any particular form of Common Assessment Task that may eventuate.

Assessment

9. Are the Blueprints meant to support assessment data already being gathered?

Data that are currently gathered about the achievements of students in Queensland are quite sparse. The Aspects of Literacy and Numeracy Tests, for example, obtain information about only a small subset of everything that students learn. Information about students' performance in large-scale, intellectually demanding tasks that are connected to the demands of the wider world would be a valuable addition to the available data. Grades in Rich Tasks currently provide this information about a relatively small number of students. Grades in Blueprint tasks have potential to supplement this dataset.

10. Do teachers assess Blueprint tasks according to their own criteria?

If teachers intend their students' grades in Blueprint tasks to be subject to a standards validation process, they will need to use the provided Grading Masters. These are the mechanism by which comparability of grades will be sought for students who have undertaken very varied tasks. If teachers do not intend their students' work to be part of this process they can, if they want, devise their own criteria, but they would still be well advised to use the Grading Masters.

11. Do the Blueprints basically cover the elements of the Assessment Placemat?

All the questions posed on the Assessment Placemat are relevant to tasks to be developed from a Blueprint. These questions are designed to help teachers ensure that the tasks they develop are quality assessment tasks. Tasks developed from Blueprints are intended to be *one kind* of quality assessment task.

12. Do they align with Assessment Immersion?

Assessment Immersion is to do with development of teachers' assessment expertise and the development of quality assessment tasks. So are the Blueprints. However, the suggested *processes* by which tasks are developed in Assessment Immersion and through the Blueprints are different. In Assessment Immersion, the teacher starts from "first principles", decides on curriculum intent and builds up a task that will ensure this intent is met and that will be able to produce appropriate evidence. In the Blueprint approach, much of this work is already done: the curriculum intent of the task and the nature of the products of the task are already established in broad terms (but need to be specified and elaborated on by the school). The Blueprint approach cannot *replace* the Assessment Immersion approach, because Blueprint tasks are only one of the many varieties of quality assessment tasks. The end products of either approach (the tasks) should still meet the criteria of the quality assessment task as put forward in the Assessment Placemat.

Implementation

13. Will Blueprints be mandated, thus reflecting a drive towards a national curriculum, standardised content/tasks/Grading Masters, as reflected in the British or US model?

There is no intention for Blueprints to be mandated.

14. What impact will they have on the professional decision making and intellectual responses of teachers and schools?

This is something that will be investigated as the Blueprints are implemented. It is hoped, of course, that the impact will be a positive one, as teachers take advantage of the support provided by the Blueprint framework to extend their curriculum, assessment and pedagogy repertoires.

15. How much time are Blueprint tasks expected to take (e.g. a unit of work over a term)?

The time allocated to a Blueprint task is at the discretion of the school. However, Blueprint tasks are envisaged as being deep and rich educational experiences. The targeted repertoires of practice that students need to master to perform to a high standard in these tasks cannot be

mastered in a short time. The Rich Tasks from which the concept of Blueprints derives are envisaged as the *culmination* of several years' work.

16. Are the tasks produced from Blueprints supposed to be standalone tasks or integrated into the existing curriculum?

Both — in different ways. As tasks, they should be experienced by the students as discrete things, something to undertake, complete and receive a result in. But as suggested in the answer to the previous question, Blueprint tasks will work best when they build on a deliberate, developmental approach to the mastery of essential repertoires. If they seem, to teachers and students, to be unrelated to the rest of the curriculum, something must be wrong: maybe the task has been poorly developed, or maybe the rest of the curriculum is inadequate!

17. Are there going to be more Blueprints?

Yes. More Blueprints are currently under development.

18. Are there going to be Blueprints for Lower Primary that aren't Maths/Science-based?

This is the intention.