

NEWS RELEASE

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

HSC REVIEW SHOWS  
EXAMINATION FAIR

A review of the New South Wales Higher School Certificate by two educational experts has shown the examination procedures to be valid and fair, but poorly understood by the community, including some employers, candidates, parents and teachers.

The Minister for Education, Mr. Eric Bedford, released the review panel's report, describing it as "a worthy document containing an especially lucid description of the Higher School Certificate."

"I accept there is an urgent need for effective communication with the public about the HSC examining procedures, and I have asked the Board of Senior School Studies to undertake this without delay," Mr. Bedford said.

The report was compiled over six months by Dr. John Keeves, director of the Australian Council for Educational Research, and Professor George Parkyn, Emeritus Professor of Comparative Education, University of London, and former director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Mr. Bedford said this independent study had found the overall system of examination and award of the HSC was sound, but a number of specific issues which had been of concern had been identified.

"The review found that the most serious problem is the extent of misconceptions held by students and their parents, teachers, employers and the community in general.

"The purposes of the examining and statistical procedures and the meaning of the results are widely misunderstood.

"The first recommendation to improve effective communication concerning the HSC will be acted on urgently," Mr. Bedford said.

The review incorporates 16 recommendations. Mr. Bedford said some have already been acted upon.

"For example, the marking of separate questions and not whole



papers by different examiners (Recommendation Four); and research into the use of the 'principal method' of moderation in schools where there are a small number studying a particular course (Recommendation Eight).

"I have told the Board that Recommendations Five, Six and Seven should be acted upon, and that it should continue its policies in relation to Recommendations Four and Eight.

The second recommendation proposes a substantial change to existing methods of reporting results. I have asked the Board to examine this proposal, and Recommendation Three, and advise me of its view.

"In respect of Recommendation Nine (restructuring of syllabuses) I am aware the Board has been considering similar proposals for some time.

"I have asked the Board to consider further Recommendations Nine, Ten and Eleven, to consult with interested parties, and advise me in due course.

"The Board has also been asked for advice in respect to Recommendations Twelve and Thirteen," Mr. Bedford said.

"The Board has been asked to make a submission to me concerning comments in the report which point to inadequate staffing, and additional resources will be considered by the Government when it is received," Mr. Bedford said in relation to Recommendation 16.

#### NON-ENGLISH BACKGROUND STUDENTS

"A specific issue involved in Recommendations 14 and 15 is the problems experienced by students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

"The report recommends for a very limited group of candidates, whose immediate past experience has been in a school where English is not the medium of instruction, that they seek to be excluded from statistical comparisons among subjects.

"The report also states further that their Higher School Certificate should be appropriately annotated. University entrance would then be negotiated on the basis of a special entry provision.

"I am concerned that this recommendation may in practice discriminate against candidates of non-English speaking backgrounds in that they may not have similar standing in the eyes of tertiary institutions, to English speaking students.

"I have sought urgent clarification of this matter by the Board, specifically the basis of determining those students who could seek exclusion.

"In 1979, the Board introduced measures to take account of the effect on course loadings in community languages, of the performance of students in English, and subjects requiring competency in English.

"The Board will continue to address itself to this complex question.

"The review dealt in part with the question of the submission of school estimates. I am aware that at present, students taking languages through the Saturday School of Community Languages do not have their estimates considered when their results are determined.

"I have therefore asked the Board to urgently consider using school estimates in determining results for community languages studies at the Saturday School.

"In view of the limited information available at present, I have endorsed the review panel's proposal for a major research study involving the whole question of community languages at the Higher School Certificate level.

"I have asked for arrangements to be made with the Commonwealth-based Education Research and Development Committee to carry out such a study, as it concerns several Australian States and will assist in long term planning in the area of community language examinations," Mr. Bedford said.





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25th February, 1980.

MEMORANDUM TO MEMBERS OF  
SYLLABUS AND EXAMINATION COMMITTEES

Higher School Certificate Examination  
Report of the Review Panel to the  
Board of Senior School Studies

The following information is enclosed:-

- (1) A copy of the Higher School Certificate Examination -  
Report of the Review Panel to the Board of Senior  
School Studies.
- (2) A copy of the News Release statement issued by the  
Minister for Education.

N.R. Shannon,  
Secretary,  
Board of Senior School Studies.



THE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

THE REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL

TO THE

BOARD OF SENIOR SCHOOL STUDIES

24 January 1980



THE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES:  
REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL

I INTRODUCTION

Because of continuing expressions of dissatisfaction with the results of the Higher School Certificate Examination and its procedures since the changes that had been brought into effect in 1976, the Minister for Education on the advice of the Board of Senior School Studies decided to set up a Review Panel to inquire into the procedures of the examination, to report on their appropriateness to the purposes intended by the Board, and to assess their fairness to candidates.

Terms of Reference

More specifically, the main issues that were to be considered in the review were: the marking procedures used, particularly in certain subjects; the statistical procedures used in the moderation of school estimates and in the scaling of marks; and the reporting procedures used to convey the results to the candidates, the schools, the tertiary institutions, employers, and other parties concerned.

Membership of the Panel

The panel consisted of:

J.P. Keeves, BSc, DipEd, MEd, PhD, Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research;

G.W. Parkyn, MA, DipEd, Litt D, Emeritus Professor of Comparative Education, University of London, and formerly Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Conduct of the Review

The panel gave lengthy consideration to a comprehensive body of background material prior to discussing the many problems and issues with representatives of the main interested parties, with officers of the Department of Education, with members of various examination committees, with teachers, and school principals and with students who had taken the Higher School Certificate in 1979.

Documentation

The panel was able to study a wide range of documents relevant to the problems and issues in question. These are recorded in Appendix 1.



Meetings were held with the following bodies and summary reports of the meetings were prepared by two members of staff of the Board:

Committees of the Board of Senior School Studies

Executive Committee  
Planning and Development Committee  
Committee on Examining  
Communications Committee  
HSC Examination Consultative Committee  
Committee of Inquiry into the Scaling of Modern Languages;

Examination Committees

English Examination Committee  
Mathematics Examination Committee  
Modern History Examination Committee  
Science Examination Committee  
Art Examination Committee  
Ancient History Syllabus and Examination Committee  
Chairman of Modern Greek, Italian, German, Indonesian,  
Dutch, Spanish and Russian Examination Committees

Representatives of Organizations

Representatives of the Catholic Education Commission  
Representatives of the University of Sydney Academic Board  
New South Wales Council of High School Principals  
Representatives of the Headmasters' Conference of  
New South Wales  
Representatives of the Association of Heads of Independent  
Girls' Schools (NSW)  
Joint Council of Professional Teachers Associations  
Representatives of the Executive Committee of the New South  
Wales Teachers' Federation  
Representatives of the Independent Teachers' Association of  
New South Wales, and  
Fourteen students who sat for the Higher School Certificate  
Examination in 1979, and who were drawn from Government  
High Schools, Catholic High Schools, A Catholic Boys'  
College, An Independent Girls' School, an Independent  
Boys' School and a Technical College.



### Overview of Findings of the Review Panel

Both members of the Review Panel were impressed by the continuing, serious, concerned, and knowledgeable efforts that are being made by the Board of Senior School Studies to develop a valid and acceptable policy on the purposes of the Higher School Certificate Examination, and to develop procedures that it deemed necessary for the carrying out of those purposes. The Panel was impressed by the sincere and sustained efforts of the individual teachers, examiners, and examination committees, to reach accurate, consistent, and fair judgments upon the achievement of the candidates in the examination. The Panel was impressed by the high level of human concern of the officers of the Department, upon whom falls much of the responsibility for advising the Board on the use of procedures of examining, processing of scripts, moderating and scaling of marks, and analysing of results. The Panel was greatly impressed also by the meticulous care with which the logistics of the operation of examining nearly 36,000 candidates in some 90 courses of study in 40 subjects were planned and carried out.

The general conclusions of the Review Panel are the following:

- (1) that the policy of the Board of Senior School Studies is a commendable, useful, and widely acceptable approach to the difficult problem of developing a Higher School Certificate Examination that can validly serve the several varied and sometimes conflicting purposes of higher secondary education;
- (2) that the procedures carried out for obtaining school estimates of the candidate's probable examination results, setting and marking examination papers and practical exercises, moderating school estimates and scaling examination marks in order to obtain comparable measures of achievement between different schools, different examiners, different course levels and different subjects are generally appropriate to the purposes of the examination, reach a high level of accuracy in their execution, and in the great majority of cases result in a fair and just assessment of the relative levels of achievement of the candidates in those aspects of their education that are being examined;
- (3) that, nevertheless, there are many particular detailed questions and issues of serious concern to the Department of Education, the Board of Senior School Studies, to examiners, teachers, parents, the



candidates themselves, and to community groups, employers, and the tertiary institutions, and these issues detract from the generally satisfactory nature of the examination, prejudice its acceptability, and affect its validity.

It has been the major concern of the Review Panel to examine in great detail the questions, issues, and problems that have arisen, and the major part of this report will attempt to set them out succinctly and clearly, to make a judgment upon their validity and importance, and, if possible, to suggest appropriate actions that could be taken to remedy the shortcomings that have been identified.

In undertaking this study the Review Panel has found that many of the questions and criticisms of the examination have arisen through a failure to understand the basis of the policy of the Board of Senior School Studies and the way in which certain procedures are used to ensure that the examination does what it is intended to do. For this reason it has seemed advisable to state what it understands to be the purposes of the Board and the procedures of the examination in some detail, and to set out the main questions, criticisms, and problems that have arisen.

## II THE AIMS AND PROCEDURES OF THE EXAMINATION

### The Aims of the Courses of Study

The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is intended to indicate that candidates have followed a satisfactory program of higher secondary school studies in Years 11 and 12, and a fundamental question at this stage concerns the structure of the curricular programs that are considered satisfactory.

Forty different subjects are deemed suitable for study at the senior secondary level. English is the only compulsory subject. A minimum of five subjects must be studied in Year 11, and four in Year 12. Many of the subjects comprise courses of different scope and depth: two-unit courses require four hours (six periods) of school work per week, and three-unit courses require six hours (nine periods) per week. There are three types of two-unit courses. Two-unit A courses are intended to provide a broad approach to a subject, useful for fulfilling general educational, social, and vocational needs. Two-unit courses are intended to go beyond the general approach to the subject and to provide, except in mathematics, some preparation for the study of the subject at the tertiary level. Two-unit Z courses enable students to begin foreign

languages in Year 11. Three-unit courses provide for a more extensive and intensive study of a subject at both school and tertiary levels. In mathematics and science there are also four-unit courses, and in one case there is a one-unit course.<sup>1</sup>

To be eligible to receive a Higher School Certificate, candidates are required to follow a program of study comprising at least 11 units in both Year 11 and Year 12, and at least two units of English must be taken each year. The award of the certificate also requires a statement from the principal of a school that a candidate's attendance, conduct and progress have been satisfactory, and that the candidate has completed courses of study in accordance with the Board's rules. Finally, candidates may present themselves for examination only in courses certified by the principal of the school as having been satisfactorily studied. It should be noted here also that some different provisions exist for a minority of candidates who have not been in attendance at secondary schools.

One of the crucial problems facing the Board of Senior School Studies is that of the increasingly diverse nature of the student body at the senior secondary level. Over the past two decades, in particular, an increasing proportion of students has been remaining at school, many of whom have little or no intention of continuing their studies at the university level, preparation for which used to be the major function of the senior secondary school. The Board wants to encourage all students to follow the kind of program best suited to their diverse needs, and to make this possible it is necessary that schools provide different courses within the same subject, courses that in some cases may need to differ in breadth and generality and also in depth and degree of specialization.

In the past, from 1967 to 1975, different levels of study of a subject were allotted different maximum marks, based on the assumption that studies in depth were educationally more valuable, especially for candidates intending to continue to university education. This practice was given up with the introduction of the restructured Higher School Certificate system in 1976, for several reasons, among which

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<sup>1</sup> Details of the subjects and courses are set out in the publication, A Guide to the Higher School Certificate, 1979.



the following were probably the most important. First, since a total score indicating performance in the Higher School Certificate Examination is the major element in the selection of entrants into universities and colleges of advanced education, courses developed with tertiary entry in view carry greater esteem and tend sometimes to be chosen by students for whom they are not suitable. Secondly, even for students who reasonably intend to prepare themselves for university education, it is by no means certain that early specialization is always essential or desirable. The debate on this point is long-standing and far from being resolved. It has seemed reasonable, therefore, that the Board should not decide to make an arbitrary decision that in all cases one approach is better than the other. It has preferred to leave it to the individual students, with the help of their teachers and other advisers, to choose what degree of specialization seems best for them. Thirdly, from the point of view of the future growth and development of the diverse fields of knowledge, such flexibility would also appear to be regarded as essential by the tertiary institutions themselves.

For such reasons among others, the Board concluded that as from 1976 all courses of study for the Higher School Certificate should be regarded as potentially of equal educational value to the students who followed them. In consequence it was decided that the maximum score that could be gained in the examination for any course would depend upon the number of units of study involved, each unit of study carrying the same possible maximum score. Each unit would have a maximum score of 50, so that for a one-unit course the maximum score would be 50, for a two-unit course 100, a three-unit course 150, and a four-unit course 200.

At this point it has been asked by some students and teachers, why have an external examination at all. If the school testifies that a student has carried out his studies satisfactorily, why not issue a certificate to that effect? In brief the Board's answer would appear to be as follows. Students themselves need to know their relative strengths and weaknesses in order that they can make decisions relating to their future development, and other parties such as tertiary institutions and employers need to know something of the relative levels of ability of individuals in different areas of study. Valid assessments of such things can, in general, be made by schools with respect to their own students, but some external measure would appear to be required when students from diverse schools and courses are to be



compared. The Board relies upon the schools to teach appropriate specific courses of study to their students, but an external examination would be needed to determine accurately the relative levels of achievement reached by the students. Furthermore, it would appear that the thinking of the Board has been largely influenced by a need to calculate a total score which estimates with reasonable validity potential scholastic achievement so that entry to universities, and to specific faculties within them, is carried out in a way that is seen to be fair and just.

#### The Aims of the Examination

As we have seen, the Higher School Certificate award is based upon evidence that students at school have followed a satisfactory program of senior secondary studies in Years 11 and 12, and the purpose of the examination itself is to enable a judgment to be made as to the level of achievement reached by a candidate relative to the other candidates, relative both to those other candidates taking the same courses and to all the other candidates engaged in the examination.

A basic question that has been raised at this point is why the levels of achievement are to be measured in terms of the relative positions of candidates one with another, rather than in terms of how much knowledge and skill has been learned. Why, it is asked, in other words, are the results given largely in terms of what position a candidate finishes in the race, rather than how fast he or she has run?

In brief, the answer to this is that while the years spent in study at school are aimed at developing certain intellectual skills and at leading to the acquisition of a body of knowledge, it is in actual fact not yet possible to measure these things absolutely and objectively. To be able to do this, it would be necessary that all candidates in any particular subject or course of study planned to follow precisely specified syllabuses or instruction. In addition, the examination questions would have to be of such a nature that the answers could be objectively marked rather than subjectively assessed. This might be possible in certain restricted areas of study, but the Panel believes that the complexity of senior secondary studies makes such an approach impossible in a large majority of courses. Even if it were possible, few people would consider it educationally desirable for all schools, in their differing circumstances and with the differing needs of their



students, to have to follow rigidly uniform programs. Furthermore, in an era of continuing change in required intellectual skills and rapid expansion of knowledge, it seems generally agreed that it is more useful to know the relative levels of scholastic achievement of the candidates rather than the particular absolute levels of achievement they have reached. While, then, the purpose of the years of study in a particular area is to enable students to learn skills and bodies of knowledge, and while the examination is one of the main motivating elements in this process, the examination as it is at present conducted is intended not so much to assess how much a candidate knows as to judge his or her level of achievement relative to that of the others.

There is a further reason for assessing relative achievement rather than absolute attainment in specific courses: the latter approach does not enable any comparison to be made of the merits of candidates taking different courses. There is no way of comparing in absolute terms how much a candidate knows in one subject with how much is known in another subject, or how well his or her skills in one area compare with skills in another area. Nor is there any way of deciding how the general quality of performance in one area compares with performance in another area, whether, for example, the achievement of those taking mathematics is equal to or not equal to the achievement of those taking geography, or animal husbandry, or other subjects. The only practicable comparisons are those that refer to the achievements of candidates in terms of their relative positions in each field.

In the assessment of the level of achievement of a candidate relative to other candidates taking the Higher School Certificate Examination, the practice has become established throughout Australia of calculating a total score for the purposes of selection into tertiary education. Many of the procedures followed by the Board in the marking of examination papers, in the moderation of school estimates, and in the rescaling of marks arise as a consequence of the demand for a total score.

The Review Panel, having given careful attention to the Board's purposes for the Certificate itself and the aims of the Examination, considers that the current procedures are, in the main, reasonable and appropriate in the present circumstances.



### The Procedures of the Examination

It is now necessary to analyse these examination procedures in some detail, and to consider carefully the problems that they raise.

A basic policy decision upon which the examination rests is that there are two different sets of information on which the candidates' achievements are to be judged, and that these two components are to be given equal weight in determining the candidates' final scores. The first is an estimate of predicted level of performance in the Higher School Certificate Examination made by the teachers in the schools. The second is a judgment made by external examiners derived from the examination papers and work submitted by the candidates.

Though there are some people who would prefer the Higher School Certificate to be awarded on the basis of the external examination alone, and some who would prefer to leave it entirely to the judgment of the schools in this matter, the Review Panel found overwhelming support from principals, teachers and students for the current policy of the Board. It was clear that on the one hand many people whom the Review Panel met and talked with argued that external examinations tended to give less reliable assessments of individual differences in levels of achievement than did the estimates and judgments of teachers who had taught, observed, and tested their students over a considerable period of time and who had been able to make allowances for such things as fluctuations in performance, changes of interest, disturbances of health, and so on, which could in individual cases seriously affect the meaningfulness of external examination results. On the other hand, however, it was generally argued that the schools could not reliably estimate the performance of their own students compared with those of other schools. For this, some outside measure was believed to be required.

For the schools' component in the examination, it is important to note that the principals of the schools are not asked to make an assessment of the total performance of the student during Years 11 and 12, but are asked to make an estimate of what they consider to be the probable score that each of their candidates is likely to obtain in each course taken for the examination. These estimates have three main purposes. First, they are to be used equally with the examination marks to determine the candidates' scores. Secondly, they are to be used for calculating scores in cases where a candidate has been prevented from



taking the examination or has been seriously disadvantaged in it by reason of illness or misadventure. Thirdly, they are used to help in the reconsideration of cases in which a serious discrepancy has occurred between the school estimates and the examination marks of particular candidates.

The Board has emphasized that these estimates should indicate a school's judgment both of the rank order of the candidates in any course and of the extent of the differences between individual candidates. Rank order alone would be insufficient, for there could be important differences in the respective distances between different pairs of candidates. Both elements are required to be taken into account by the schools in making their estimates.

#### The Moderated School Estimates

While research has shown that schools can rank their own candidates both validly and consistently, it has also been found that they cannot accurately indicate level of performance relative to that of candidates in other schools. For this reason the marks that are added to the examination marks are not the schools' "raw" estimated marks but "moderated" estimates, that are arrived at by retaining the rank order and spread of the marks of candidates in a school while placing them on a common scale provided by the raw marks given in the external examination.

The means and standard deviations of both the school estimates and the examination marks are used in this moderating operation which involves the drawing of a straight line to equate performances obtained in the two ways. This has been called the "principal method", and was originally used only when the number of candidates taking the course in question in a particular school was twenty or more. The validity of its use for dealing with small groups, is confirmed by research studies carried out in Scotland in 1979.<sup>2</sup> It is now applied in all cases, except where there is only one candidate or where in a very small group one candidate may have received an extremely divergent examination result. In these rare cases direct subjective judgments have to be

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<sup>2</sup> See D.A. Walker, "The Standardization of School Assessment". In Scottish Education Department, Issues in Educational Assessment. Edinburgh: HMSO. 1979, p.79.

made. The moderated school estimate is added to the external examination mark to form the "composite mark", which is the basic mark used in all the subsequent scaling operations.

#### The External Examination

Details of the procedures used in setting and marking the papers and projects involved in the external examination are set out in the Handbook for Examination Committees issued by the Board. Only a few of the main points need be described here.

In general, a three-hour written paper is set for each course, though in certain subjects additional tests are also held. In most subjects the questions set are of the essay type, though in some subjects objective and short-answer questions are included. In mathematics problem-solving tasks are required, in foreign languages translation is required, and there are various other tasks in different areas. In some cases precise objective determinations of the correctness of the answers can be made by the examiners, but in the great majority of courses the assessment of the quality of the answers depends on the subjective judgment of the examiners. This being so, the main problems faced by the examiners marking the papers in a given course are those of achieving equivalence between their standards of judgment as to the different levels of performance, and achieving reliability in their ranking of the performance of candidates.

Various methods are used to achieve the highest degree of equivalence and reliability, some of which are the following:

- (a) having "trial runs", in which the examiners mark the same questions, compare their marks, and thus try to adopt equivalent standards;
- (b) having senior assistant examiners check the papers marked by different assistant examiners to see whether at different points in the range the same marks are being allotted for equivalent performance;
- (c) having different examiners mark separate questions throughout a given set of papers so that an examiner's judgment on one question in a given paper does not influence his judgment on another question;
- (d) having more than one examiner independently mark questions or sections of a paper, and averaging the results.



Only when the examination committee for each subject is satisfied that all practicable steps have been taken to ensure the reliability and equivalence of the marks awarded to the candidates in a particular course are these examination "raw marks" used to rescale the school estimates and to form, together with the moderated estimates, the composite mark.

#### Unit Scores

Some teachers, and examiners, have asked why the scaling process needs to be taken any further, why the composite marks cannot be the final marks in the various courses and subjects.

One major reason is that it is necessary to calculate a total score based on the best 10 units from recognized courses taken by a candidate for the purposes of selection for entry to tertiary institutions and in particular for entry into certain faculties in universities. The Review Panel agrees that under the present circumstances this is necessary. There are several things about examinations that prevent the marks in one course or subject from being equivalent in meaning unless they have been carefully scaled to the same yardstick. Unless this scaling is undertaken it is meaningless to add marks together. In the first place, it is impossible to ensure that all examination papers are in fact of equal difficulty. Obviously this is impossible between subjects, for example a mathematics paper compared with a history paper. Moreover, it is difficult to ensure equivalent levels of difficulty even with different courses in the same subject. So if the candidates taking a paper that is more difficult than other papers are given a lower range of marks they will be unfairly treated. Secondly, the examiners in different subjects tend to have different marking patterns. Some tend to set the marks of their average candidates higher than others do and some distribute their marks more widely from the average than others do, some using a full range, say from 0 to 100, while others restrict themselves to marks between say 30 to 80, and so on. Again, candidates at the ends of these differing ranges will be either penalized or unfairly rewarded by such differing distributions of marks, unless these marks are converted to some common scale, before they are added together.

For these reasons the composite marks are scaled in such a way that any particular mark will mean approximately the same thing no matter to what course it refers, i.e. so that it will indicate the same relative position of a candidate no matter to what course it refers.



The first step in comparing marks from different courses and subjects is to convert them to the same scale in which the range of scores is set at 0 to 50 for each unit, with the average or mean score set at 25, and the standard deviation at 12. When the composite marks are converted to this unit scale the candidates all keep the same rank order as the composite mark gave them for each course, and they retain the same relative distances one from another; but now any particular unit score has a similar meaning in each course. It should be noted here that after the final steps in the scaling process, still to be described, the unit mark of each candidate in any given course will be multiplied by the number of units comprising that course; i.e. a two-unit course will earn the candidate double the unit score, a three-unit course treble the unit score, and the four-unit course four times the unit score.

It is at this point in the scaling process that the scores per unit available to candidates of equal level of performance are made to be the same no matter what courses they take, whether or not some courses are at a higher level of difficulty and have attracted more able students, or at a lower level of difficulty and attracted less able students. Thus it will follow that a student studying two-unit courses in each of five subjects should be able to obtain the same total marks as an equally able student choosing three-unit courses in two subjects and two-unit courses in two subjects. It should be noted here that as there are wide differences of opinion on the relative value of more general versus more specialized studies, there is no agreed way that different weights can be allocated to these different combinations of subjects, so equal weighting is the only acceptable approach.

It will be recalled that in the first step of the scaling process the composite marks in each course, derived by adding together the moderated school estimates and the examination marks, are converted to the same scale, on a unit basis, with 0 - 50 score points for each unit, and with the mean value set at 25 and the standard deviation set at 12. In this way differences in the points at which the average marks are set by the different examiners, and differences in the way they spread their marks above and below the mean, are as far as possible eliminated, and this is done without in any way altering the relative positions of the candidates within the courses they have taken. The scores allotted now have the same meaning no matter to what course they refer.



### The Weighting or Loading of Scores

It is here that several teachers and examiners have thought that the scaling process should stop, at the point at which an accurate indication has been given of the relative positions reached by each candidate within the groups of candidates following the same courses or subjects.

However, there is a further important aspect that the Board has considered must be taken into account here, namely the fact that groups of candidates taking different courses and subjects are likely to be at different levels of scholastic ability. For example, the candidates taking three-unit Classical Greek will almost certainly be a small, highly selected and scholastically able group, while those taking two-unit English are likely to be at about the average level for all the HSC candidates. In such a case, the information that particular candidates received the average mark in Classical Greek and that others received the average mark in two-unit English, or that they are either high or low in particular courses, is not in itself sufficient to enable the candidates to be compared across subjects. Such information would only be enough if the potential scholastic ability of the different groups were the same, as indeed it would be if all candidates were to take the same courses. But when courses are taken by different groups of candidates it is quite possible that those scoring low marks in a highly able group might, even for that particular subject have a greater scholastic potential than they have for another subject, in which they happen to have scored very high marks because in it the other candidates are of relatively lower ability.

In the opinion of the Board it is important to be able to estimate what level a candidate could be expected to reach in a given course if the total range of candidates had taken the same course. On the necessity of this further kind of estimate the Review Panel also agrees with the policy of the Board, since without it the calculation of a total score would be meaningless. The question remains, whether such an estimate can in fact be made. The answer is that it is possible to do so with considerable accuracy, on the assumption that students who are more able as a group will show a higher average level of performance on the other subjects that they take, and that students who are less able as a group will exhibit a lower average level of performance on their other subjects. This assumption is justified, in general, by the high degree



of correlation that is found between the performance of students across different subjects. It is possible, therefore, to estimate with reasonable accuracy at what level in the total candidature a particular course group would be likely to be placed if all the candidates had taken the same course. The group of marks attained by the candidates taking a particular course can then be raised or lowered accordingly.

The next step in the scaling process is to find the average unit score that the candidates in a particular course have achieved in all their other courses, and to raise or lower all the unit scores in the course in question by the difference. This change in scores in a particular course will change the aggregate scores of candidates in the other courses, so the process must be repeated several times using the new scores at each step, until no further changes in scores occur. This is called the "iterative" process. Prior to this stage in the scaling process, the distributions of scores in the various courses are adjusted in accord with the spread of aggregate scores received by the candidatures. In this way differences in the spread of the different course candidatures are retained in the distributions of their final scores. The scores that finally emerge from this iterative procedure of weighting or loading are good estimates of how well the candidates in a particular course would probably have done if all the other candidates in the whole examination had also studied that course.

It is important to point out here that this weighting process, based upon some measure of general performance, can be justified only if the performance of the candidates in the particular courses followed has been fairly assessed and is accurately indicated by the marks assigned. To be fairly assessed, candidates must have had the opportunity to learn their other subjects on equal terms with all the other candidates. However, this is a condition that might not apply in cases such as that of candidates whose examination performance in their other subjects had been lowered because of their inadequate knowledge of the English language. This is a matter that must be considered later in this report.

As a final check on the validity of this adjustment of the scores in different courses in the same subject, examiners re-read samples of papers from the top, near-top, middle, near-bottom, and bottom of the range in each course, and compare them across courses, to ensure that justice has been done.



It is more difficult, and indeed in most cases impossible, to make the same sort of check on the equivalence of the scores across different subjects. In most cases therefore the results of the scaling process will not be subsequently changed as between different subjects, unless any striking and unexpected disparities should appear between the score patterns of the different subjects.

#### The Aggregate Score

When the final weighted scores have been arrived at for each of the courses, each candidate's best ten unit scores are added together, giving the aggregate HSC score on a scale of 0 to 500, in which the mean score of all candidates is approximately 250. The standard deviation of the aggregate scores, which reflects the patterns of distributions in the various courses, tends to be in the vicinity of 85.

#### Result Notices

Each candidate currently receives the following information about his results. There is, first, the final scaled score awarded for each course taken, together with the percentile band into which each score falls. The scaled score is an estimate of the level of achievement that could have been expected if all candidates had taken that course, but the percentile band indicates a candidate's position among just those candidates who did in fact take the same course, i.e. whether the candidate was in the top ten per cent of these, or in the next ten per cent, and so on. Next comes the aggregate score, the sum of the best ten unit scores, and the percentile ranking of this aggregate score in relation to all the other candidates in the Higher School Certificate Examination.

The schools receive their candidates' results, and in addition they receive information which is intended to show how accurately their estimates of their candidates' performance predicted the final scores. This information on the performance of students in the examination is forwarded to the Metropolitan Universities Admissions Centre (to be called Universities and Colleges Admission Centre from 1980) and to the tertiary institutions for selection purposes.

### General Finding

The Review Panel has devoted much time and care to studying the whole examination process as outlined above. It is of the opinion that the whole process is carried out with great care, and that in their general conception the procedures are valid and fair. A great deal of the anxiety, uncertainty, and lack of confidence that have been expressed by many interested parties results from a failure to understand the reasons for some of the procedures employed, and from misinterpretations of the meaning of the final scores awarded. This matter is of great importance.

#### Recommendation 1. The Review Panel recommends:

that increased efforts should be made to explain as simply and clearly as possible the aims of the examination and the procedures employed, to teachers, parents, candidates, the general public, and the examiners themselves.

### III SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF THE EXAMINATION

The Review Panel, at the same time as viewing the examination favourably in general, has recognized and carefully considered several specific areas where problems have arisen and may continue to arise. These will now be analysed.

#### The Credibility of Examinations

One of the most frequent criticisms of the Higher School Certificate Examination has been that candidates have received marks that have been too low. This has disappointed both candidates and their parents, their teachers, and in some cases the examiners. The disappointment has in some cases deterred students from continuing their studies in particular fields, and has discouraged teachers who have been deeply committed to their subjects and their students. It has been stated, too, that low scores have disadvantaged students in their search for employment. Frequently the low scores have been seen to be the fault of the scaling system. Complaints have often been couched in terms that indicate a belief that while the teachers and examiners have awarded "true" marks these have been arbitrarily "scaled down".

It is extremely important that questions such as these be resolved, and the Review Panel has given much attention to them. There are several different aspects to consider, and several different reasons why disappointment has occurred. The following are some of the most frequently discussed issues.



### The Meaning of a Score

Since the abolition of the concept of pass/fail from the HSC Examination, it has become most important that the final examination scores should be distributed in such a manner that they can show as accurately as possible the order of merit of candidates and the relative size of the intervals separating them on a rank-order scale. To achieve this, the scores in general need to be widely distributed along whatever scale is used, rather than bunched up closely round the average. In the HSC Examination, in the main, this is achieved by using the whole range of the scale available: 0 to 50 for each unit (0 to 100 for a two-unit course, 0 to 150 for a three-unit course, and so on) and, at the first stage of the calculation of the unit-score, with the average score set at the mid-point of the scale at 25, and the standard deviation at 12. Later, in the "loading" stage, the average scores are moved above or below this mean, and the standard deviation becomes smaller.

The distribution of scores widely above and below a mean set at the midpoint of the scale is still misunderstood by many people who have been used to the traditional marking pattern in which the midpoint, or some score near it, has been used as the pass/fail cut-off point, and the average mark for a class has usually been set much higher. For example, when the pass mark was set at 50 on a 0 to 100 scale, few students were given marks lower than 30, the average mark might have been as high as 65 or 70, and only exceptional students would have received marks as high as 80 or 85. Some such marking systems have remained in most people's minds, and indeed they are still the common practice in many school and university classes. In part the retention of such marking systems is reasonable when they are based upon the fact that in a particular classroom situation within a particular subject area specific bodies of knowledge are being taught, and the marks given can reasonably be used to indicate the amount learned and whether the amount learned is deemed to be satisfactory or not. Hence a mark of 0 would never be given, as it could imply in such a situation that nothing had been learned. Moreover, a mark of 100 would almost never be given (except perhaps in mathematics) as it might be thought to imply that everything expected had been learned.



It is argued, however, by the Board of Senior School Studies that the situation is very different in an examination of the Higher School Certificate type, covering a wide range of different subjects and courses, with no pass/fail point, and with little possibility, as explained earlier, of making objective measurements of the amount of knowledge acquired. All that is possible is to make judgments of achievement in relative terms, that is, in terms of the relative positions reached by the candidates when compared one with another. However, when this essentially different situation is not understood, people tend to interpret the HSC scores in the traditional way. They think that candidates scoring below 50 out of 100 have been "failed", namely, half the candidates that have been failed; and, indeed, all except those at the very top end of the scale seem to have been given lower scores than they have been accustomed to expect. Especially is this disturbing for those candidates in the lower half of the statewide range of scores who, in their school classes, may frequently have been receiving marks above 50 out of 100.

Where the teachers do understand the different meaning of the present HSC relative scale of scores compared with the more traditional scale, and where they explain this to their students, and also explain the significance of the percentile bands reported for the different courses taken, there is usually little surprise at the results. The disappointment that exists is the familiar one of not doing as well as one had hoped to do, rather than that of receiving an incomprehensibly low score. However, even where teachers, candidates, and parents understand the scale, prospective employers may not, and many teachers and parents believe that candidates with scores under 50 out of 100 have in fact been regarded as "failers" and have been refused employment for this reason.

A remedy must be found to this situation, in which percentile bands are frequently not understood, and in which scores below 50 out of 100 are frequently seen to represent failure. Proposals have ranged from leaving the scale as it is but putting more effort into explaining how the results should be interpreted, to the other extreme of abolishing marks entirely and using in their place performance categories (expressed by some such means as letter grades). In between are proposals to scale the scores not to a general average of 50 out of 100 but to one that would be closer to the traditional level, say between 60 and 65, and to



leave the lower end of the scale unused, say, below 30, except for extremely unusual cases.

Recommendation 2. The Review Panel recommends:

that the Board should give serious consideration to the removal of the percentile bands from the Certificate, replacing them with "Course Scores" that would give a more easily understandable indication of a candidate's performance on each course relative to the students taking that course. The Panel recommends that such "Course Scores" should be on a scale from 0 to 100, with a mean of 62, or thereabouts, and a standard deviation of 12. The maximum score for a course would be 100, and the lower scores would very rarely fall below 25. Alongside the "Course Score" the Certificate should carry a "Tertiary Entry Subject Score" which would be calculated on the same unit-score scale as at present, with a unit mean per subject of 25 and a standard deviation of 12. This score would be an estimate of the level of performance that could be expected of a candidate in a given subject if all students who had sat for the HSC Examination in that particular year had taken the same subject. It is essentially a prediction of probable performance, rather than an indication of actual performance. As such it is of great value, but the distinction between the nature of the "Course Score" and the "Tertiary Entry Subject Score" must be kept clear. Further, the Certificate should continue to show an "Aggregate Score", as at present, based on the best ten-unit scores from the Tertiary Entry Subject Scores, and as at present, the percentile band in which a candidate's Aggregate Score falls should be given.

The Level of Expectation

Even when the meaning of the marks is understood, and the reason for their wide distribution appreciated and accepted, the actual level at which the candidates from a school score on the whole examination or in particular courses has often caused disappointment. In the majority of such cases it would appear that the basic reason is that when the number of candidates taking a particular course is small, the teachers are not able to make a reasonably accurate estimate of how their candidates are likely to measure up to the average level of performance of candidates from all the other schools. In consequence both teachers' and students' expectations tend to be too high, and their disappointment great. This is a situation that is most likely to occur with small candidatures, and with teachers relatively new to the Higher School Certificate Examination. Also, of course, as the restructured Higher School Certificate is itself of recent origin, many teachers have not yet had enough opportunity to form in their minds any accurate idea of what an approximate statewide average level of performance might be, against



which to try to see the position of their own small group of students. It is true that from the point of view of using the school estimates as part of the examination data this does not matter, for the schools need simply place their candidates in their correct relative positions within their own school groups taking the particular courses. However, from the point of view of the teachers and their students, unrealistic expectations can have serious consequences. It is necessary for schools to improve their estimates, not with respect to the ranking of students and the spread of marks but rather with regard to the level of mark assigned.

Recommendation 3. The Review Panel recommends:

that the Board give consideration to reporting to schools the comparison between the school estimate mark for performance in a course and the examination score obtained within a particular course, this examination score to be recorded on a scale of 0 to 100, having a mean of 62 and a standard deviation of 12. The school should also be provided with the "moderated school estimate score", which should indicate performance on a scale equivalent to that used for examination scores having a mean of 62 and a standard deviation of 12. In addition the "composite score" obtained by averaging the examination score and the moderated school estimate score should be provided to schools.

Examination Unreliability

In the cases to which the preceding sections refer, the surprise and disappointment have been related to the level of marks awarded to a complete group of students taking particular courses or subjects, or at least to a majority of the candidates in these groups. In such cases the teachers were seldom dissatisfied with the rank order or relative positions of the candidates within their course groups; it was rather the general level of their placement that was disappointing. In most of the cases of this kind considered by the Review Panel the actual results appeared to be fair, and the basic problem was a misinterpretation of the meaning of the scaled scores.

In a few cases, however, it did seem that the disturbing results of some school candidatures were caused by some examiners giving marks that were too low relative to the marks given by other examiners to equally able candidates in the same courses. This would appear to have been the case, for example, in the 1978 marking of the three-unit English course, in which some examiners marked complete papers for complete school candidatures, and variations in their standards would not seem to have



been identified during the checking procedures. In the case of this particular English course "scaling" was frequently blamed; but the evidence indicates that it is rather more likely that many of the schools that considered their candidates had been unfairly treated had received the lower marks at the "raw mark" stage, that is, before scaling took place. For while the raw marks statewide for 1978 were on the average higher (mean mark 88) in this course than for 1977 (mean mark 79) the candidates in many of these schools received lower raw marks than in the previous year, although in the opinion of their schools they were just as good as their predecessors. It would, of course, have been possible that these candidates in fact were not as good as those of the previous year when compared with the statewide candidature. While, however, this could easily have been possible if only a few schools had been involved, in this particular case the number of schools was fairly large, nearly thirty. Moreover, in 1977 the school estimates were in many cases more highly correlated with the examiners' raw marks than they were in 1978, and this too would seem to indicate that the discrepancies may have occurred at the marking stage. It should be noted here that the way the schools perceived the situation was affected by the fact that in 1977 the three-unit English scores had been given an unusually high "loading" at the final stage of scaling, placing an exceptionally large proportion of candidates at the top end of the range as compared with other subjects. This is a matter that will be returned to later. Here it is relevant to point out that this exceptional loading was not repeated in 1978. Nevertheless, in the meantime the schools' expectations had undoubtedly been raised to the higher level, so the 1978 scaled scores were much lower than had been anticipated. This, however, does not alter the fact of the lower raw marks obtained by many of those schools at the 1978 examination.

One of the sources of marker discrepancies is the practice, which was no longer followed in 1979, of having whole papers marked by one examiner, rather than having different questions or sections of a paper marked by different examiners independently. Using the first method it is difficult to ensure that different batches of papers marked by different examiners are marked to the same standard, even when the normal cross-checking is carried out by other examiners.



Recommendation 4. The Review Panel recommends:

that where an adequate number of examiners is involved the practice of ensuring that one examiner assesses only one question or section from each script be maintained. In addition, consideration should be given to the double marking of scripts, particularly in English and other similar subjects, where highly subjective assessments are made and where research has shown that high reliability of marking is difficult to achieve.

Individual Discrepancies

In several schools, even where the general level and rank order of results obtained were judged by the teachers to be fair and reasonable, individual cases have occurred of serious discrepancies between the results and the expectations of a candidate, or between the school's estimate of a candidate's probable scores and the final scores awarded.

In some such cases it is individual students and their parents who have misjudged the candidates' relative strengths and weaknesses, and have been surprised to find that, when compared with the statewide candidature, what the candidates thought were their best subjects turned out not to have been so. In such cases usually the teachers' estimates have been more realistic. There have, however, been cases where individual candidates have received results that were below what was expected by their schools, even when in these schools the general results were seen to be fair. Where the examination score is markedly below the moderated school estimate score relative to other members of the course group from the same school the scripts in question are automatically eligible for review, so that an independent check can be made in order to see whether an error has occurred, and if so what adjustment should be introduced. In some cases through clerical and other errors the school estimate mark has been unexpectedly low. No procedures would appear to exist for the detection of such errors.

Recommendation 5. The Review Panel recommends:

that consideration be given to the identification of cases where a candidate's moderated school estimate score is markedly below the examination score relative to the other members of the course group from the school, and to the practicability of requesting schools to check the accuracy of their estimates.

The School Estimate

Several problems recur with respect to the process of making school estimates.



In the first place many teachers have indicated that they do not yet clearly understand all that is implied in the requirement that they estimate the final scaled score that their candidates are likely to be awarded. Their difficulty is clear. On the one hand, they have been used to giving marks for school work in the traditional range, know what such marks mean, and feel confident of their ability to do this. On the other hand, they have become aware that the final HSC Examination scores will tend to be set lower in the scale and spread more widely above and below the mean than has been their custom. While it is probable that most teachers now know that it does not in fact matter which way they set down their estimates so long as the marks they use place their students in their correct rank order of merit and indicate accurately the different intervals separating one from another, many still find it hard to reconcile the different scales and to interpret the scaled estimates in terms of their own original raw estimates. They would like the information returned to them to be more meaningful.

Recommendation 6. The Review Panel recommends:

that the procedures proposed above for returning to schools information on the use of estimates in calculating the composite score be followed, together with a detailed and readily comprehensible account of how the different scores have been calculated.

Confusion still exists in many teachers' minds on the question of how to make estimates that apply to a particular course within a subject and at the same time have such estimates indicate the school's judgment of the position of their candidates across the whole range of all their candidates taking different courses in the subject. The Board asks them to do this, if they can, without distorting the within-course judgments, but they do not understand what is meant by distorting within-course judgments and fear that any attempt to do so may disadvantage their candidates. They are aware that it is the Board's policy that candidates of equal scholastic potentiality should be able to obtain equal scores on a unit basis no matter what particular course in a subject they study. However, they also know that, if there are differences in the potentiality of candidates in different courses as indicated by the candidates' scores in all their other subjects, these differences will be likely to change the relative levels of scores for the different courses in the final stages of scaling. Even when they understand and accept the necessity of such scaling, they are unsure how



to make estimates over a whole subject. The difficulty is increased also because some teachers still consider that students taking three-unit courses must nearly all be of better quality than those taking two-unit courses, and should therefore be given higher unit scores. It is, however, difficult for schools to estimate the relative potentiality of students taking different courses, often with different teachers, and this difficulty is compounded when some teachers have preconceived ideas about the differences. The Board has emphasized that making across-the-subject judgments is not a prime requirement, being valuable mainly for research purposes, but teachers who are unclear how they should do this have found themselves losing confidence in their ability to make estimates. They have been anxious lest in some way they might disadvantage their students.

In consequence there have been several different approaches to the process. Some schools have tried to make across-the-subject estimates, but others have given up the attempt. Whichever approach they have taken, many still find it hard to understand the relationship between the original raw estimates they submit for the examination and the moderated and scaled estimate returned to them afterwards to help them see how accurate they were. Furthermore, while the making of such estimates at the subject level could be expected to provide accurate information concerning the relative performance of all candidates within any section common to a two-unit and a three-unit course it would not do the same for the unique sections of these courses and this could lead to a distortion of the whole scale.

Recommendation 7. The Review Panel recommends:

that school estimates be made at the course level only. The making of estimates at the subject level should not be required even for the purposes of research.

One of the other major concerns of the principals of schools with respect to school estimates has been changed and need be touched on only briefly at this point. It was concern over the "ranking" method of moderating the school estimates in those cases where only a small number of candidates, fewer than twenty, were taking a particular course. In such cases, the candidate with the highest estimated mark in a particular course from a school could not receive a higher estimated score than that of the highest examination mark given to candidates in the course in his school, while the candidate with the lowest estimated



mark from a school would receive a score derived from the lowest examination mark given to candidates in the course in his school, but adjusted in case one candidate for some reason or another did extremely badly in the external examination. Much of the criticism of this ranking method tended to exaggerate the possible effects, by not taking into account the care devoted at the moderating stage to watch out for exceptional results and to counteract them by not including extreme cases in the moderating process. This problem, however, no longer arises, since all moderating is now done by the so-called "principal" method. There are, however, still likely to be some difficulties in the case of courses with only a few candidates in them.

Recommendation 8. The Review Panel recommends:

that research be undertaken to examine the consequences of using the principal method of moderation in cases where there are fewer than five candidates taking a particular course in any school. In the light of the findings of this research consideration should be given to requiring schools to engage in making estimates in cooperation with another school in a similar situation, and to the alternative of not using school estimate marks for the purposes of forming a composite score where very small groups are involved.

The Two-unit Three-unit Problem

Providing different courses within a subject was intended by the Board to enable students who developed a special interest in any particular field to extend their knowledge in it, probably but not necessarily with the intention of continuing with study of the subject at the tertiary level. Furthermore, it was hoped that students would be encouraged to choose the courses that were most appropriate to their interests and abilities. Thus it was decided that on a unit basis equal scores should be obtainable by candidates reaching levels of achievement that were equivalent in relation to the scope, content, and purposes of the different courses. This goal, if attainable, would make attractive those courses of study that were developed specifically for students who had no intention of pursuing the subjects to a higher level. Recognizing too that many very able students who chose to extend their studies in one particular area might equally well have chosen other areas, the Board was concerned to ensure that excellent achievement should be equally rewarded on a unit basis whether such students took the more extensive or the less extensive courses.



In theory then, the scores obtainable by any candidate should be equal for equal competence whatever subjects and whichever course within a subject were chosen. This was intended to encourage the choosing of subjects and courses on their intrinsic educational value to the students concerned. The reduction that has already taken place in the proportion of candidates taking three-unit courses is regarded in some quarters as an indication that increasing numbers of students entering upon senior secondary studies with no intention of continuing to the tertiary level are choosing more wisely than in the past.

However, another element also has entered the situation. It has been extremely unfortunate that a common belief has emerged among students and teachers that in some subjects the three-unit candidates have been at a disadvantage compared with the two-unit candidates. This belief has led many students to choose two-unit courses even when their interests and their intention to proceed to higher studies would indicate that three-unit courses would have been more appropriate. They have thought that by taking the two-unit courses they stood a better chance of gaining higher unit marks and an aggregate that would ensure their acceptance by the desired tertiary institutions.

There are different reasons given for holding this belief. One, which is based on a failure to understand the scaling process, is that candidates of potentially high ability in a particular subject will, if they choose a two-unit course, be competing against much less able candidates and will therefore obtain high marks. This will be true provided that large numbers of equally able students do not make the same choice. However, it fails to take into account the loading process whereby a low-performance candidature will have its unit marks reduced, while a high-performance candidature will have its unit marks raised. This process should, in theory, help to ensure that a candidate's result will be the same no matter which course he has chosen.

A less naive but more solid ground for the belief is the knowledge that at the final stage, after the scaling process has been completed, a large number of two-unit candidates do in fact obtain final unit scores that exceed those of many three-unit candidates. In some subjects the overlap of the distributions of scores is such that a score that is one standard deviation above the mean for the two-unit candidature has about the same score value as does the mean for the three-unit candidature, and a score one standard deviation below the mean for the three-unit



candidature has about the same score value as the mean for the two-unit candidature. In this case about 16 per cent of the two-unit candidates will score better than the lower half of the three-unit candidature. Moreover the candidates in the upper half of the two-unit candidature will score better than those in the lowest 16 per cent of the three-unit candidature.

This overlapping in itself is in no way evidence that three-unit candidates have in some manner been put at a disadvantage by the examination process, for there is indeed no reason why the candidates in the different courses should be so completely different in their levels of performance that there would be no overlap. It is of course true that we can expect that the majority of candidates taking a three-unit course will have higher performance in the subject, and that a smaller proportion of the two-unit candidates will reach equally high levels in their final marks. However, in terms of absolute numbers there may well be more two-unit candidates than three-unit candidates scoring marks above a specified level, simply because in many subjects there are so many more of them, 15 times as many in English, for example, and 3 times as many in Mathematics. It is these absolute numbers of candidates that impress the teachers and the students themselves. They see many two-unit candidates getting higher marks than some three-unit candidates, but this is not in itself evidence of disadvantage.

It has, however, seemed likely to the Review Panel that the effects of regression to the mean, which occur in the iterative rescaling operation, have reduced the difference between the three-unit and two-unit candidatures in certain subjects, even if the relative level of equivalence between subjects had been approximately correct.

In considering such questions as the above, teachers and examiners have made the suggestion that the equivalence or otherwise of the candidatures in different courses in the same subject might be more accurately assessed if there were common elements in their examination papers. Common questions have been suggested in some cases, common sections in others, and for some subjects it has been thought desirable that the two-unit and the three-unit candidatures should take a common paper with a supplementary paper just for the three-unit group. By means of such common elements it is thought that the comparability problem between courses within a subject could be overcome in those cases



where the loading process, based on the aggregate mark in other courses, did not seem to have been accurate enough.

There are many practical problems involved in such approaches. First, on the one hand not all subjects at present have common elements in the syllabuses for different courses; especially is this likely where the courses differ in content but not necessarily in the levels of ability or knowledge called for. On the other hand in courses that developed from one another, where the three-unit course could not be done without covering the work of the two-unit course, it could be a waste of the three-unit candidates' time to have to be examined in the more basic areas. Secondly, common questions in examination papers must adequately sample both courses to give a fair indication of the relative levels of performance. This would require more than just one or two questions being included for this purpose.

Apart altogether from the practical problems, which could of course be overcome even if syllabus changes had to be made, there is a serious theoretical question involved, and one that bears upon the policy of the Board in the matter of equivalence of courses. It is likely that wherever three-unit and two-unit candidatures are compared on the basis of their ability to deal with the same material in the same subject, the three-unit candidature will tend to reach a higher level. This is obvious in subjects where the courses are sequential and learning is cumulative, in the sense that mastery of the preceding course is necessary for learning successfully the later course, as in the case of certain aspects of mathematics and some of the natural sciences. It is also likely to be true for subjects that are not divided up into sequential courses but in which advanced study does develop skills, knowledge, and perspectives that will improve performance in the work of the other courses. Many teachers and examiners consider that in such cases it is right to give the highest unit-marks to the three-unit candidatures, and not to let the best of the two-unit candidates get such high unit-marks unless their performance equalled that of their three-unit competitors. A question to be asked is not whether the level of work done by three-unit candidates in a subject is higher than that done by two-unit candidates (it should be) but whether it is higher than could have been reached by the two-unit candidates of equal ability had they taken the three-unit course. Alternatively, to look at the problem from another direction, the question must be asked whether the able



two-unit candidates would have been as good as equally able three-unit candidates had the latter taken only the two-unit course. Clearly no simple means of answering this question is readily available.

Recommendation 9. The Review Panel recommends:

that consideration be given to the restructuring of syllabuses in such a way that students studying a two-unit course within a subject should study common content with those studying a three-unit course within the same subject, and those studying a three-unit course in mathematics should study common content with those studying a four-unit course in mathematics. Under these circumstances the two-unit candidature would take a common three-hour examination paper with the three-unit candidature, and the three-unit candidature in mathematics would take a common three-hour paper with the four-unit candidature in mathematics. Furthermore, those candidates who had studied a subject at a higher level would take an additional two- or three- hour examination paper to provide an assessment of their performance in the additional content they had studied. These procedures for the design of syllabuses and for the conduct of the examinations would correct many of the anomalies that occur at present in the equating of levels of performance across courses in the same subject.

The Review Panel notes that these equating procedures could already be applied in Science as the syllabuses are currently constructed and the examinations are currently conducted. In addition, Art has already developed syllabuses for 1980 and is planning examinations for 1980 that will achieve these purposes.

Recommendation 10. The Review Panel recommends:

that since the two-Unit A and the two-Unit Z courses are, in general, different in kind from the two-unit and three-unit courses in the same subject, these courses should not be included in the procedures suggested above, but should continue to rely upon the iterative procedures currently employed for establishing equivalence across courses and across subjects.

There is another aspect of the problem of equivalence which is prominent in the minds of some students and their teachers. This is the belief that in some subjects the syllabuses setting out the required scope and content of the different courses are not fairly enough balanced with respect to the amount of time of study and level of ability required. In the case of the two-unit and three-unit courses, it is thought that in some subjects the three-unit candidates have to do much more work than is implied in the difference between the number of hours or periods laid down for the two courses. A three-unit course is supposed to be allotted 50 per cent more time than the two-unit course, but many students and teachers maintain that the syllabuses cannot be



adequately covered in that time. Acting on this belief, many candidates decide to take the two-unit course in their strong subject, in order to be able to spend the additional time on their weaker subjects. They hope in this way to maximize their marks. The solutions to these many interrelated issues will not be achieved quickly, but they underlie many of the criticisms of the current operation of the Higher School Certificate Examination.

Recommendation 11. The Review Panel recommends:

that Syllabus and Examination Committees give careful consideration to appropriate differences in scope and content of the two-unit and three-unit courses (and for mathematics the four-unit course) in their subject fields.

The Loading Process

The aim of the "loading" process, as we have seen, is to make the different candidatures comparable in terms of their respective levels of general performance, and thus to ensure that the final scaled scores of the individual candidates indicate the relative levels they would be likely to have reached in their respective courses had all the candidates in the examination taken those courses. This is generally accepted as necessary if justice is to be done to candidatures at different ability levels, and the Review Panel is satisfied that the procedures used are essentially valid. There are some detailed matters, however, that need further consideration.

The first of these concerns the "final" loading. For each course, the average of the unit marks gained by its candidates in all the other courses they have taken is calculated, and, after going through the iterative procedures this is used to indicate how many score points should be added to or subtracted from the candidature's original unit-score mean of 25. This amount is termed the "initial" loading. Then the Consultative Committee, taking into account the recommendations of examiners who have made cross-checks on the quality of the scripts at up to seven different points in the distribution of marks in the different courses of a given subject, makes decisions as to the maximum and minimum marks to be awarded in each course, the extent of the adjustments to be made to the course means, and the distribution of the marks between the different check points. These adjustments lead to what is termed the "final" loading. The Examination Committees have



expressed strongly their dissatisfaction with the very limited amount of time that has been allowed them to undertake the necessary cross-checking of scripts.

Recommendation 12. The Review Panel recommends:

that the purposes and function of this final loading stage be critically examined, and procedures developed to ensure that adequate time is available for thorough checking of the adjustments made to the scores at the final loading stage.

This final step is undoubtedly a necessary one, to ensure that the initial calculations show no flagrant inconsistencies. It is, however, a difficult step, for it re-introduces those subjective sources of variation in standards that the scaling procedures are intended to correct. Varying judgments at this stage can disturb the comparability already achieved by the earlier steps in the scaling process. As an example of this, the adjustments made to the initial loadings in the 1977 English courses may be cited. The adjustment upwards made to three-unit English gave high marks to a much greater proportion of candidates in this course than had been given in other subjects. In this case, marks of 135 and over out of 150 were given to four times as many candidates as received them in many other subjects. There is, of course, no a priori reason why the proportions should be the same, as the quality of the candidates can be expected to vary, but adjustments that take one subject far out of line compared with the other subjects and with the calculated initial loadings, require very critical scrutiny before being finally accepted.

Recommendation 13. The Review Panel recommends:

that the initial calculated loadings be adjusted only if there is undoubted evidence from comparison both across subjects and across years that the loading provided by the scaling procedures is unsound.

The proposed use of common papers for two-unit and three-unit courses should eliminate many of the problems associated with the loading process.

Non-English-Speaking-Background Students

A further and serious problem in the loading process is that of finding an appropriate measure of general performance for groups of candidates who may have been consistently at a disadvantage in many of the subjects of the examination. The outstanding example of this kind of disadvantage is that which may be experienced by groups of candidates



whose command of the English language is deficient because they have come from non-English-speaking backgrounds. If they take as an examination subject their mother tongue, as presumably one of their stronger subjects, the problem arises of how to scale the composite scores so that they reflect the level of general performance of the candidates and thus can be fairly compared with the scores assigned in other subjects. The average mark gained in the other courses taken by the candidature of these subjects may have been unduly depressed by the students' lack of proficiency in the English language. Thus the usual loading criterion may be invalid in their case.

There is no easy solution to this problem, but initial research would appear to indicate that the specific disadvantage, which can be calculated by the exclusion of English scores from the iterative procedure for the determination of subject loadings, is small. It appears to be between one and two score points per unit for languages such as Modern Greek and Japanese. Further research is needed particularly with respect to how far the aggregated marks are correlated with the English language marks of candidates taking the community languages and the extent to which their aggregates have been lowered by language deficiencies.

In the meantime other steps must be taken to estimate the general levels at which the mark distributions in the community languages should be set. Possibly the most immediately practicable approach would be to have a special committee of examiners in modern languages who would make evaluations across subjects to see if they could, with reasonable confidence, estimate the relative levels of performance reached in the community language candidatures compared with those reached in the foreign languages more traditionally studied by English-speaking candidatures, for example, languages such as French and German. Such estimates would be difficult to make, but there would appear to be no completely valid and practicable alternative at the present time.

The Review Panel has considered the Draft Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Effects of Present Methods of Marking, Scaling, and Reporting Results in Higher School Certificate Languages. Several of the issues set out in their report have been dealt with in a wider context in the earlier sections of this report. However, the proposal that Saturday Schools, Technical Colleges and Evening College authorities should be permitted to submit estimates for their HSC Modern Language



candidates, would appear to have repercussions for all other Private Study Candidates, who form a sizeable group. The Review Panel sought evidence on the performance of Private Study candidates, and their problems, but was faced with a lack of information on these matters. Consequently, the most appropriate course of action at this time would be to suggest that research be undertaken into the needs, interests and circumstances of Private Study candidates, including those studying Modern Languages, prior to considering the feasibility of school estimates being made for them. There are, in addition, other problems that are likely to be raised about the education provided for this important subgroup of candidates.

Recommendation 14. The Review Panel recommends:

that candidates who, in the two years prior to sitting for the Higher School Certificate Examination, have attended full-time, schools in which English was not the language of instruction may at the request of their school be excluded from the calculation of the between-subject loadings using iterative procedures. For such candidates Tertiary Entry Subject Scores would be calculated by using their examination marks and the score scale for the remainder of the candidature in a particular course. Such a request from a school should also make the candidate eligible for special consideration for entry to tertiary institutions, on account of lack of proficiency in English. Special entry provisions would need to be negotiated with tertiary institutions, but this is believed to be consistent with current practices.

Recommendation 15. The Review Panel recommends:

that a major research study be undertaken into the teaching of modern languages at the upper secondary school level in New South Wales. Such a study would examine the comparative aims, nature, and content of the syllabus of instruction and examination prescriptions for the different modern languages; differences in level of difficulty of the examination papers set, and the level of competence required to meet the examination requirements; the nature of the candidature for the different modern languages, including the needs, interests, and aspirations of the students studying modern languages; and reasons for the decline or growth of the study of certain modern languages in the schools of New South Wales.

Without such information from research it would appear impossible to make appropriate provision for the differing needs of the candidatures of the various modern language courses.



#### IV GENERAL CONCLUSION

The Review Panel, finally, would repeat that, after a close study of the large and complex operation of the Higher School Certificate Examination, it has come to the conclusion that on the whole the examination methods and procedures have been developed and carried out with great care for the interests of the candidates and the various other parties to whom the Higher School Certificate is important.

The hard, prolonged, and meticulous efforts of all people involved, the Syllabus and Examination Committees, the teachers, the markers, and the clerical and administrative staff, to carry out the procedures laid down in order that the final results may be accurate and just are widely appreciated by all those who have come into close contact with the actual process of examining, and they are deserving of the highest commendation.

There have arisen, inevitably, many problems in the course of the development of the examination, and these have been the major concern of this review. The Review Panel, wishes to emphasize strongly its finding that by far the most generally serious reason for lack of confidence in the examination, and anxiety lest injustices should occur, has been the fact that so many concerned people - parents, students, teachers, and even examination markers themselves - have not understood well enough the overall aims and procedures of the examination. This lack of understanding has been caused, basically, by the fact that the considerable and important changes that have been made in recent years have not been adequately explained to the schools in particular and the public in general. Certain aspects of the aims and the procedures of the examination are indeed complex, yet it is the firm opinion of the Review Panel that the whole operation can be explained in considerable detail, yet in reasonably simple and comprehensible language, and that if this were done thoroughly, a very large part of the recurring anxieties of parents, students, and teachers would be prevented, with a consequent raising of confidence in the examination and of the morale of all those involved in its operation. The Review Panel wishes to repeat here its first recommendation, that steps be taken by the Board of Senior School Studies to have a comprehensive but simple account of the aims and procedures of the Higher School Certificate Examination prepared and given the widest circulation.



At the same time, several of the specific issues, questions, and problems investigated by the Review Panel, and on which it has made recommendations in the preceding section of this report, will continue to arise in particular circumstances. Inevitably, too, new questions will arise, during the preparation of students for the examination, during the actual operation of examining, and afterwards when results are being studied by all the persons concerned. The Panel has found that many cases have occurred in which people needing urgent, specific, and clear answers to questions that have legitimately been of great concern to them have not been able to be provided with the information they needed, when they needed it. Complaints about the insufficient attention given to such requests for urgent and important information have come not only from parents, candidates, and teachers, but even from examination markers and Examination Committees.

In most of such cases, in the opinion of the Review Panel, the fault has not arisen through any lack of concern on the part of the examination authorities, but through the fact that the Board of Senior School Studies which, with its several specialized committees carries the responsibility for all such matters, is inadequately staffed at both the professional and clerical levels and therefore has not been able to develop an adequate system for co-ordinating certain important aspects of the work of the many individuals and committees charged with carrying out its complex duties.

Recommendation 16. The Review Panel recommends:

that immediate and serious attention be given by the Department of Education to the organizational structures required for the effective discharge of those aspects of the general responsibilities of the Board of Senior School Studies that have been found to be suffering from inadequate staffing and means of co-ordinating its wide-ranging activities.

This recommendation, the Review Panel wishes to emphasize, does not refer to the organization and conduct of the examination procedures themselves. It refers rather to a wide range of matters which in a sense are peripheral to the actual examination process, but which are of great importance to a general understanding of the whole operation, and are crucial factors in giving all concerned parties confidence in the general validity of the process and the justice and fairness of its results.



The importance of the work of the Board of Senior School Studies is great; and in these changing times when it is necessary to be developing new policies and programs for the education of youth at the senior secondary level, provision must be made for the Board to be able to deal promptly, fully, and flexibly with the wide-ranging and complex matters that will continue to be its concern. The Review Panel has been impressed with the work of the Board, but is convinced that it must be provided much more generously with staffing and facilities so that it can develop an organizational structure that has greater coherence and can thus ensure the most effective co-ordination of the activities needed for the fulfilment of its responsibilities.



## Appendix 1

### LIST OF DOCUMENTS EXAMINED BY THE REVIEW PANEL.

#### Documents from the Board of Senior School Studies

- Board of Senior School Studies. Annual Report. 1978.  
Sydney: Government Printer, New South Wales, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A Guide to the Higher School Certificate. Sydney:  
Department of Education, New South Wales, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Higher School Certificate. What You Need to Know.  
Sydney: Government Printer, New South Wales, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Higher School Certificate. Handbook for Examination  
Committees. Pilot Edition. Sydney: Department of  
Education, New South Wales, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confidential Statistics. 1977 Higher School Certificate  
Examination. Sydney: The Board. (no date).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confidential Statistics. 1978 Higher School Certificate  
Examination. Sydney: The Board. (no date).
- \_\_\_\_\_ General Statistics. 1977 Higher School Certificate  
Examination. Sydney: The Board, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_ General Statistics. 1978 Higher School Certificate  
Examination. Sydney: The Board, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Processing of Higher School Certificate Examination  
Marks. A Technical Paper. Sydney: Department of Education,  
New South Wales, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Higher School Certificate Examination. Scaling Papers.  
A collection of papers assembled by the Board. (no date).
- Cook, J.S. and Cooney, G.H. The Scaling of Marks at the Higher School  
Certificate Examination. Sydney: Board of Senior School  
Studies, 1976.
- Cook, J.S. and MacCann, R.G. A Proposal for the Use of School Estimates  
in Determining Higher School Certificate Awards. Sydney:  
Board of Senior School Studies. (no date).
- Cook, J.S. and MacCann, R.G. Marker Reliability in the 1974 Higher  
School Certificate Modern History Examination. Sydney:  
Board of Senior School Studies. (no date).
- Cook, J.S. and Melick, R. The Relationship Between School Estimates and  
Scaled Marks in the 1976 Higher School Certificate  
Examination. Sydney: Board of Senior School Studies. (no  
date).



MacCann, R.G. The Effectiveness of Double Marking the Poetry Section of HSC. Level 2 English in Terms of Cost. Sydney: Board of Senior School Studies. (no date).

Draft Report of the Committee of Inquiry into The Effects of Present Methods of Marking, Scaling, and Reporting Results in Higher School Certificate Languages.

Submissions to the Committee of Inquiry into The Higher School Certificate Examination Modern Language Subjects.

New South Wales, Department of Education. Higher School Certificate Examination 1979. Requirements Specification. Prepared by the Department.

Memoranda Issued by the Board of Senior School Studies

- 1976 Higher School Certificate Examination: School Estimates.  
Memorandum to School Principals. (Circular 53) July, 1976.
- 1977 Higher School Certificate Examination: School Estimates.  
Memorandum to School Principals. (Circular 58) September, 1977.
- 1977 Higher School Certificate Examination: School Estimates.  
A Supplementary Statement. Memorandum to School Principals.  
(Circular 64) September, 1977.
- 1979 HSCE: The Marking of Papers. (E3/6/79) April, 1979.
- 1979 Higher School Certificate Examination: School Estimates  
Memorandum to Schools. (Circular 36) June, 1979.

Papers Prepared by the Staff and Members of the Board

- 1 Background Paper: The Board of Senior School Studies/Higher School Certificate Examination. 1979.
- 2 The Marking of the Higher School Certificate Examination: A Position Paper. (no date).
- 3 Scaling of Marks in Higher School Certificate Language Subjects. November, 1979.
- 4 1978 Higher School Certificate Examination. Inexplicable Results in 3 Unit English - A Response to the Examiners' Case. August, 1979.



#### Written Submissions from Individuals

Buckwald, V.T. Professor of Applied Mathematics, Head of School of Mathematics and Dean-elect, Faculty of Science, University of New South Wales, and

Mack, J.M. Senior Lecturer in Pure Mathematics, University of Sydney. Chairman, Mathematics Syllabus and Examination Committees, NSW Higher School Certificate.

Cook, J.S. Coordinator, School Certificate Development Unit, Examinations and Scholarships Division, Department of Education, New South Wales.

Cooney, G.H. School of Behavioural Sciences, Macquarie University.

Stanton, G.R. Associate Professor, Department of Classics and Ancient History, University of New England and Chairman, Ancient History Syllabus Committee.

Tarrant, H.A.S. Department of Greek, University of Sydney and member of Classical Greek Examination Committee.

#### Newspaper Comment

Williams, G. (Editor) "Education Herald". The Sydney Morning Herald. Tuesday, 28 August, 1979.

Editorial. The Sydney Morning Herald. Friday, 31 August, 1979.

Dawson, C. (Editor) "Education Herald". The Sydney Morning Herald. Tuesday, 30 October, 1979. p.18.

A collection of letters to the Editor referring to the Higher School Certificate Examination assembled by the staff of the New South Wales Education Department during 1979.



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Language Course - Slovenian Language Manual II.

As anticipated, Volume II of the Slovenian Language Manual represents an expanded continuation of its forerunner, based as it is on the same well-established conversational method, and firmly grounded on appropriate grammatical aspects.

A detailed outline of Volume I has been submitted by Mrs. Aleksandra L. Ceferin, B.A., M.A., Dip.Ed., in her proposed Syllabus that has been adopted and approved by the Department of Education, Victoria, and subsequently accepted also by the Department of Education, New South Wales, as the most suitable text-book for Slovene secondary schools up to, and including, the H.S.C.

A short summary of the lessons will show that this Volume II forms but an organic sequence of the previous one, as outlined by Mrs. A.L. Ceferin.

Lesson I

Extension of cardinal and ordinal numbers with particular emphasis on expressions of time. Set phrases and idioms relating to time.

Lesson II and III

Review of tenses of the verb JESTI ( to eat) with pertaining lexical and conversational material on foods and drinks as well as eating habits.

Review of the Slovene idioms "to like", "to prefer", and the adjectival prefix "pre" (too) denoting "excessive" degree.

Lesson IV

The formation of the genitive case in all four declensions, adjectives and pronouns. The uses of the genitive case.

Lesson V

Review of the genitive case.

Lesson VI

The conditional and its various forms and tenses.

Lesson VII

\* The formation of the locative case and its uses.

Lesson VIII

Reflexive verbs. Extensive list of most frequently used verbs with reflexive pronouns "se" and "si". Important note on difference between English and Slovene forms.

Lesson IX

The infinitive and the supine. Their uses.

Lesson X

Expressions denoting "liking".



Lesson XI

The imperative.

Lesson XII.

The formation and uses of the instrumental case.

Lesson XIII

The optative.

Lesson XIV

Review of certain topics treated in the previous lessons. Expressions denoting "obligation" and "ability".

Lesson XV

Systematic review of verbs grouped in five conjugations in accordance with their present-stem endings "-a", "-e", "-i", "-ne", and "-je". Special mention of a few irregular verbs (BITI, ITI, PRITI).

Lesson XVI

Extension and review of some important grammatical topics.

Lessons XVII and XVIII

Review of prepositions and their function in the Slovene language. Prepositions governing the genitive, dative, locative and instrumental cases. Prepositional phrases.

Lesson XIX

Notes on some irregular plurals and changes of stress in the declension of SRCE. Declension of some nouns that are usually used in the plural only.

Lesson XX.

Special reading lesson on MAN. General physical description, his role in nature, and moral destiny.

Lessons XXI and XXII

Conversational discussion on human diseases and bodily health. Oral hygiene and dental care.

Lesson XXIII

Special reading on Friderik Pregl, "the father of micro-analysis" and the Slovenian Nobel prize winner for chemistry in 1923.

Lesson XXIV

Verbal nouns and their formation.



Lessons XXV and XXVI

Sporting activities in general. Special reading about the Slovene gymnast Miro Cerar, gold medal winner at the Olympic Games in Tokyo (1969) and Mexico City (1968).

Lessons XXVII - XXXIII

Slovene farm life. Fauna and flora. Special reading on John Holer, the Slovene recipient of the Progressive Development Award, 1971, and founder of Marineland and Game Farm, Niagara Falls, Canada. Zoos and aquariums. Exercises involving Slovenian history and culture. Special reading entitled "This is Slovenia" with illustrations and attractive historical, cultural, and geographical background.

NOTE: A further Volume III, completing the entire Series of this "Slovenian Language Manual", and mainly treating Slovenian literature and history, is now in preparation.

LEVEL THREE

The complete series of the Slovenian Language Manual is designed primarily to afford students of the Slovenian language to acquire a practical knowledge of the spoken language and to learn to read and understand Slovenian texts on normal everyday topics as well as easy fiction.

This course of study covers the principal rules of Slovenian grammar and phonetics.

It would be indeed simple to transcribe a grammatical index of any of the most widely <sup>used</sup> and authoritative Slovenian grammars as compiled by Dr. A. Breznik - Jakob Šolar - Dr. Bajec - Dr. Rupel - Dr. R. Kolarič, individually or collectively, and to try to implement it in our schools, but such an attempt would certainly be impracticable, unsuitable and totally unfair for both our students and teachers.

For it must be borne in mind that even the native students in Slovenia itself have to grapple with a highly inflective and complex grammar for a number of years, if they are to reach a leaving - examination level.

Clearly, such exacting criteria could not be applied here where most students and even some teachers must be considered Australians with a limited knowledge of the Slovenian language, no matter what their "degree" of adjustment, integration, assimilation, etc.

In Australia, where there is but little opportunity for proper practice of any foreign language, it will be imperative to base the language teaching on a conversational method with very extensive oral drill. This is to be attained only through careful repetitive enunciation at different speeds <sup>leaving aside</sup> ~~at the total expense~~ of any discursive logical methods.

Obviously, to obtain lasting results the teacher will have to use the Slovenian Language Manual very judiciously, and constantly gauge his students' receptiveness and response.

Hence, I feel there is nothing to be added to the general synopsis of grammatical topics to be mastered at this level, as proposed by Mrs. A. L. Ceferin. Her table is an exhaustive one, it is true, and could be adequately covered in a certain number of years. However, it will be up to the teacher to decide how much, when and where to choose his lexical and grammatical material for successful instructions leading up to the HSC.

Before repeating Mrs. A. L. Ceferin's general grammatical scheme, let me stress a few points that may prove useful right now as the Department of Education has opened the Saturday classes also for the instruction of the Slovenian language.

I) The best way to get a good pronunciation is to try to imitate a native Slovenian.

The descriptions of the various sounds given in the text itself and more methodically in the Appendix of Volume I (pp. 290 - 333), though complete for our purposes, are only an approximation; nothing can replace the careful guidance of a trained native speaker.



The next best substitute, in my judgment, would be tapes to accompany the textbook or, at least, a couple of cassettes demonstrating the fundamentals of Slovenian phonetics (with practical hints for English-speaking students, if possible).

Finally, any reliable but not too specialized chapter or text on Slovenian phonetics, or at least a "two-way" dictionary (e.g. Kosmač - Škerlj: Slovene - English Dictionary) should be a constant vade-mecum for students and teachers alike.

The aural - oral approach to a foreign language is based on an intricate psychological process, as most linguists will be aware, where the receptive and retentive powers of a student can be stimulated to a high degree by a good teacher. Hence it is that "initiative" and "originality" have no place for the beginner in a foreign language. Parrot-like imitation is preferable to incorrect original formulations. This may prove particularly important for students of Slovenian extraction who bring some home-made dialectical rudiments into the classroom.

Any changes of sequence of teaching material, reviewing, amplifying or substituting exercises or curtailing lexical or grammatical material can be left to the discretion of the conscientious Slovenian teacher, as long as such innovations are in harmony with the Manual accepted by the Department of Education, and reach the standard required by the present syllabus.

However, it must be stressed that the long and thorough teaching experience on which the approved Manual is based, will surely reduce any leaning towards greater flexibility to a minimum.

2) Every Slovenian teacher should be well acquainted with the main difficulties English-speaking students experience in pronouncing Slovene vowels (no diphthongal slurring, cf. Scotch vocalization), Slovene consonants (rolled "r" (again Scotch "rolling") and vocalized "l"), group of consonants, palatalisation, etc.

3) The dual, a unique x) Slovene linguistic feature, should be given careful attention when declensions and conjugations are being discussed. Unfortunately, this will increase the already considerable number of inflexions, thus creating even greater difficulties particularly for English-speaking students. Nevertheless, the dual must be presented in all its forms; it would be wrong to console the student by stating: "The dual is rather hard to remember; it is not readily understood and handled by anyone. So it won't be a terrible mistake if you simply replace it by the respective plural. Slovenians will understand you."

x) Not to appear too "parochial", it must be said that the Lithuanian language, a Baltic branch of the Indo-European languages, still has a dual form in declensions and conjugations.



Imperfective and perfective aspects of verbs must be well explained and put in proper perspective, so that the English - speaking student will fully grasp and properly use this characteristic Slav verb form.

Prepositions governing various cases, and Slovene punctuation will have to be given adequate care.

4) A thorough perusal of the Slovenian Language Manual will probably reveal some typing errors, mistaken stresses, and unnecessary Americanisms. All Slovene teachers would be requested to take careful note of such deficiencies and forward them, together with their suggestions, to the Authors who will be deeply indebted for any advice given.

5) Slovenes living in Australia, in the USA or Canada will gradually start transplanting certain words or idiomatic expressions into their original vocabulary, as our forefathers used to do when under German, Italian and Serbo-Croat influence. It will be our constant task to see that unnecessary foreign words or idioms do not creep into our Slovene thesaurus where we have a proper wealth of original, most suitable and semantically exhaustive expressions.

Here now follows the schematic table of the various parts of speech, which together with a proper study and training in Slovenian phonetics and syntax should enable the student to gain an adequate knowledge of the Slovenian language. This table, too, has been compiled and submitted by Mrs. Aleksandra L. Ceferin.

NOUN - Declension: Changeable Stress; Stress on the last Syllable;  
Formation of Words with Suffixes; Diminutives; Collective Nouns;  
Nouns denoting Quality; Nouns denoting Materials.

ADJECTIVE - Declension; Declension of Adjectival Pronouns; Comparison;  
Formation of Adjectives: Adjectives ending in -en, -ski, -ev; Adjectives denoting Possession; Adjectives formed from Verbs; Adjectives formed from Adjectives and ~~Verbs~~ Adverbs.

NUMERAL - Cardinal numerals: Declension; Ordinal Numerals: Declension;  
Formation and Use of: Adverbs of Quantity, Multiplicatives, Disjunctives and Fractions.

PRONOUNS - Declension of Personal and Possessive Pronouns; Reflexive Pronoun; Interrogative, Indefinite, Negative, Demonstrative, Relative Pronouns and Pronouns of Totality; Personal Pronoun and Monosyllabic Prepositions governing the Accusative Case.

ADVERBS - Formation of Adverbs from Adjectives; from Pronouns; from Verbs;  
Adverbs ending in -ic and -krat; the Comparative Adverb; Interrogative Adverbs; Adverbs of Place, Time, Manner and Cause.

VERB - 5 Major Groups; some Common Irregular Verbs - Verbal Forms, Uncomposed: Infinitive, Supine, Participle in -l, Participle in -n, or -t, Verbal Noun, Present Tense, Imperative, Participle, in -c.

Verbal Forms, Composed: Past, Future and Pluperfect Tense, 2 Forms of Passive, Reflexive Verb.

Perfective and Imperfective Verbal Aspect.



PREPOSITIONS - governing Genitive; governing Dative, governing Accusative; governing Locative; governing Instrumental; Prepositions governing Locative and Accusative Case (Locative for position, Accusative for direction); Prepositions governing Instrumental and Accusative Case (Instrumental for position, Accusative for direction); Monosyllabic Prepositions governing Accusative and Personal Pronouns; Prepositions as Prefixes.

CONJUNCTIONS - Conjunctions denoting Coexistence; Contrast; Alternative, Cause, Consequence; - Conjunctions introducing Subordinate Clauses.

SYNTAX - Positive, Interrogative and Negative Sentence; Direct and Reported Speech; Relative, Coordinate and Subordinate Clauses.

*Ludvik Klakošćer*