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Australian Certificate of Education

ACER has been awarded a contract with the Australian government to investigate options for an Australian Certificate of Education. ACER was awarded the contract following a public tender process. ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters will lead the research.

During the project the existing arrangements for Senior Secondary Certificates of Education in each of the states and territories will be examined to assess their standards and appropriateness. Then a range of options for introducing a national secondary certificate will be analysed and assessed. The options to be considered include:

- A national certificate as an alternative to the existing state-based final year certificates;
- A national certificate which evolves from the existing state-based certificates;
- A national certificate which is a general aptitude test similar to that used in the United States; and
- A national certificate modelled on the International Baccalaureate.

Finally ACER will propose the implementation steps for introducing an Australian Certificate of Education.

Professor Masters stressed that ACER has been commissioned to conduct a research project and not to develop any of the suggested options for use in Australian schools.

"At this stage ACER is conducting a piece of research in order to determine which of a range of options might be suitable for development as an Australian Certificate of Education," Professor Masters said. "No decisions have been made and we have not been commissioned to develop any particular option."

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He added that the options under consideration are not mutually exclusive. It is possible that a combination of these options will be identified as the most appropriate, or that other options will also be investigated.

ACER will be consulting widely with key stakeholders throughout the research project. In examining each option for a national certificate, consideration will be given to what requirements students would need to fulfil, the rationale behind the requirements and how standards might be determined. How a national certificate would impact on and relate to the current arrangements in each state and territory will also be taken into account.

The research is to be guided by an advisory group chaired by DEST. A report on the findings and recommendations will be delivered to the federal government by the end of the year.

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Identifying the student at risk

The Australian Principals Centre, now part of ACER, is conducting a series of skills based workshops with leading adolescent psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg who says that, whether they like it or not, schools have become the front line in the provision of psychological 'first aid' to many young people.

According to Dr Carr-Gregg "at least 5 per cent of young Australians are growing up in a psychological wasteland, devoid of the support and nurturance that they require."

Dr Carr-Gregg is presenting a series of one day skills based workshops for the Australian Principals Centre that outlines techniques for assessing the psychological well-being of young people. These techniques will enable school staff to establish rapport, assess risk and determine what interventions are the most appropriate.

"This is arguably the most vulnerable generation of students, in our history and their psychosocial health is well below that of their parents, when they were teenagers," Dr Carr-Gregg says. "The early identification of students at risk is associated with prompt treatment and a much better long term outcome."

The workshops are suitable for all school personnel working in a pastoral care position. Dr Carr-Gregg's workshop program will also take in Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, Wollongong, Darwin and Hobart .

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg is Australia 's best known adolescent psychologist and one of the country's leading authorities on teenage behaviour.

Anyone interested in attending a workshop should contact Mary Cahill at the Australian Principals Centre on (03) 9277 5442 or by email [.JavaScript must be enabled to view this email address.](#)

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Middle Years Assessment Test (MYAT)

ACER Press has released the new Middle Years Ability Test (MYAT). MYAT is a pair of parallel general ability tests suitable for students aged 10 to 15 years. It replaces the long-standing ACER Intermediate Tests F and G - building on the popular features of the original tests while making substantial improvements.

MYAT provides a multifaceted estimate of a student's level of general intellectual abilities in the domains of literacy, numeracy and non-verbal reasoning.

The test items require students to:

- Sort explicit, prominent information in verbal, numerical or non-verbal format
- Exercise control over basic literacy skills (spelling, word knowledge, synonyms and antonyms, sentence structure)
- Exercise control over basic numeracy processes (arithmetical, fractions, sequences)
- Draw simple inferences from verbal, numerical or non-verbal data
- Connect ideas separated in text in adjoining sentences and reach a conclusion
- Make connections between different elements of information and calculate summaries
- Locate explicit information embedded in text, sort through irrelevant elements and find an answer
- Infer underlying relationships (draw together several pieces of explicitly stated verbal or numerical information to infer a relationship; draw together several pieces of implied non-verbal information to infer a relationship that is not directly stated)

Normative data for the revised MYAT tests were collected from a nationally representative sample of primary and secondary schools in August 2004. Data were obtained from over 3000 students in years 5 to 9. The ages for the students ranged from 9 years 6 months to 15 years 6 months. The students were drawn from schools across seven States and Territories and all education sectors were represented.

MYAT allows teachers to make comparisons between the learning achievements of a student (or group of students) and other Australian students - both at their own year level and other year levels included in the reference sample. As well as the total MYAT score, sub-scale scores can be calculated to provide a profile of each learning area tested (literacy, numeracy and non-verbal). The tests can be scored within the school or sent to ACER Test Scoring Services.

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MYAT results can be used to describe learning outcomes, inform teaching targeted to student needs and as a basis for predicting achievement.

For further information on MYAT please contact ACER Press Customer Service by phone on (03) 9277 5447 or by email at [. \(JavaScript must be enabled to view this email address\)](#) Additional information is also available at ACER Shop.

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ACER UPDATE

Rowe, Pollard and Rowe take out research award

Dr Kathy Rowe (Consultant Physician in the Department of General Medicine, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne), with Jan Pollard (Audiological Services Specialist, Sonic Innovations Pty Ltd) and Dr Ken Rowe (ACER's Research Director, Learning Processes), have been awarded the prestigious Rue Wright Memorial Award for Research Excellence in Paediatrics & Child Health by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. The trio received the award at the College dinner held in Wellington, New Zealand on 10 May where they presented the winning paper entitled: "[Literacy, Behaviour and Auditory Processing: Does teacher professional development make a difference?](#)".

TIMSS 2006/07

ACER has been awarded the contract with the federal government to conduct the Australian component of the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) 2006/07. TIMSS 2006/07 is the fourth cycle of internationally comparative assessments dedicated to improving teaching and learning in mathematics and science for students around the world. Carried out every four years at the fourth and eighth grades, TIMSS provides data about trends in mathematics and science achievement over time. Australian reports from the previous cycles of TIMSS are available for download from the [ACER - TIMSS website](#).

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