REVIEW OF INCREMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A review of the increment used as an incentive for students to undertake WACE courses at the highest stage they are capable of is to be carried out by Prof George Cooney.

Written submissions are to be sent to:
Prof G Cooney
c/o TISC
100 Royal St
East Perth WA 6004.

See Appendix 1 for possible questions and information that may assist your submission.

Closing date for submissions: 2 May 2011

BACKGROUND

On 22 January 2007 the then Education Minister, Hon Mark McGowan, announced “All Year 12 students will need to sit exams before graduation”. The Curriculum Council clarified this statement in a memo to schools on 24 January 2007, reporting, “All students enrolled in stage 2 and stage 3 units in Year 12, who have completed two course units, will sit exams.”

A letter to TISC from the Curriculum Council on 15 February 2007 confirmed that there would be compulsory separate stage 2 and stage 3 course examinations from 2009, together with the remaining TEE subject examinations, and that from 2010, separate compulsory stage 2 and stage 3 course examinations would replace the remaining TEE subject examinations.

TISC commissioned Dr M T Partis to consider how students could be encouraged to undertake courses at stage 3 rather than stage 2, as preparation for possible university studies. Dr Partis proposed the notion of an increment (see Paper titled Scaling Stage 2 and Stage 3 Course Results by Dr Mike Partis (April 2007) at www.tisc.edu.au/static/statistics/misc/scaling-increment-index.tisc).

In April 2007 the idea of at least three scaled scores in stage 3 courses being required for university admission in 2010 was raised by TISC.

In May 2007, after representation from the school sectors, the universities agreed that there should not be any restriction on the number of stage 2 scaled scores required for university admission. The case was put that, due to resource and timetabling issues in schools (small schools in particular), students capable of university study would not be able to study some of their courses at stage 3.

By June 2007 the Department of Education, Catholic Education Office, Association of Independent Schools, Curriculum Council and TISC Management Committee agreed to the use of a 15 mark increment added to the combined stage 3 marks of each course before scaling from 2009, to encourage students to study stage 3 if capable of doing so. At this stage it was recognised that the structure of the mathematics course was different from all other courses and would need to be considered separately. In August 2009 it was determined that the increment would be added to the adjusted combined stage 3 marks after preliminary scaling to place stage 2 and stage 3 marks within a course on the same scale.
After further discussion, the increment of 10 for Mathematics was confirmed in May 2008 (see paper titled *Mathematics Courses and Incentives from 2010 (Year 12)* by A/Prof K Harrison at [www.tisc.edu.au/static/statistics/misc/scaling-increment-index.tisc](http://www.tisc.edu.au/static/statistics/misc/scaling-increment-index.tisc)).

It was also agreed that the use of the increment should be reviewed in 2011 once all WACE courses had been implemented in 2010, using the 2010 results.

**PURPOSE OF THE INCREMENT**

The introduction of the increment was to provide an incentive to encourage and reward students for undertaking courses at stage 3 if they are capable of doing so, or in the case of Mathematics, the highest unit pair they are capable of studying. This is a highly desirable educational outcome.

At the same time, the increment should not disadvantage students capable of university studies who had to undertake some of their courses at stage 2 because of resource/timetable issues, by preventing them from achieving results suitable for university entry.

The application of the increment changes the ranking of stage 2 students relative to stage 3 students within the course concerned, in recognition that the stage 3 students undertake the more difficult “level” of the course. See *Marks Adjustment Process for University Admission* at [www.tisc.edu.au/static/statistics/misc/scaling-increment-index.tisc](http://www.tisc.edu.au/static/statistics/misc/scaling-increment-index.tisc) for a detailed explanation of the processes.

The size of the increment was never meant to be seen as a measure of the “difference” in difficulty between stage 2 and stage 3.

**LIMITS OF REVIEW**

The review will not consider the wider issues of moderation of school assessments, standardisation, or Average Marks Scaling (AMS).

The review will examine the effectiveness of the increment as an incentive for students to study at the highest stage they are capable of. As such it is expected that the size of the increment (15 marks for all courses, except Mathematics where it is 10 marks) will be one of the factors to be considered.

**MAKING A SUBMISSION**

Please address your submission to Prof Cooney, c/o TISC.

Submissions after the closing date, 2 May 2011, will not be considered.

You may find Appendix 1 useful when developing your submission.
APPENDIX 1

Suggestions for Submission to the Review of the Increment

When making your submission please provide as much detail as possible and in particular, please give specific information to support your submission. For example, details of students you think were advantaged or disadvantaged by the use of the increment should be provided.

Please provide the name / organisation and contact details of the person submitting in case Prof Cooney would like to follow up on your submission.

The following questions have been provided as a guide to aid your submission:

- Has the increment encouraged students within each course to study it at the highest level they are capable of? If no, why not?
- For most courses, more students study at stage 3 than stage 2. For some courses there are more students studying at stage 2 than stage 3. Is this because the incentive has not worked for these courses, or is there some other reason?
- Is the increment of 15 (10 in the case of Mathematics) too large an incentive? If so what should it be and why? If it was reduced, would it still provide the incentive for students to study at the highest level they are capable of?
- Is the increment of 15 (10 in the case of Mathematics) too small an incentive? If so what should it be and why? If it was increased, would it penalise capable students who had to undertake some of their courses at stage 2?
- Should the increment be different for each course? If so, how should each increment be determined?
- Should the incentive be removed? If so, how would students be encouraged to attempt their courses at the highest level they are capable of doing?
- Other comments