

Applying for Year 7 selective high school placement Webinar

Thursday 14 October, 2021

Questions raised but not covered in the webinar

Answers provided by the NSW Department of Education, High Performing Students Team

What assessments marks will be corresponded in relation to illness and disadvantage? NAPLAN / ICAS etc or only school marks

The illness/misadventure process targeting factors affecting the test score will result in a severity score applied to the placement score. Where students miss the whole test the selection committees will consider each case individually and see what alternative methods can be used to derive a placement score.ents marks will be corresponded in relation to illness and disadvantage? NAPLAN / ICAS etc or only school marks

Will there be scaling this year, even if there are no school marks?

The test scores will be scaled and weighted in the usual way but there will be no moderated or weighted school assessment scores

How about if the child is 20 in reserved list for first school but number 30 in the main list for second choice? Do we have such a scenario?

Yes. The student could be offered a place at the second-choice school and remain on the reserve list for the first choice but if we have not offered the place at the first-choice school before 3:00pm on 14 December 2022, the student's name will come off that first reserve list unless the parents give up the offer to the second choice school.

Do you stay in reserve till May 22 or 23?

Provided you have not accepted a place at another selective high school your child can remain on the reserve list until the end of Term 1 2023. (6 April 2023)

Will you get a reserve first ...offer for second?

If your child has high enough marks for an offer to your second choice and also to be on the reserve list for your first choice, that will be your outcome. It all depends on your child's score. You can end up unsuccessful for all choices, on a reserve list for one or more choices, offered a place at the highest choice for which your child qualifies or any combination of those.

My son in selective school says some children cannot follow the material being taught and are not bright at all. Is this indication that the selection process does not select students who are actually gifted but only selects for children that are good at taking tests?

No large-scale selection process is foolproof. There will always be students who do not thrive in a selective setting, just as there will be students who should have been selected but weren't. The majority of students, however, are well-placed. We know this because students in selective settings continue to do well in state-wide assessments such as NAPLAN and the HSC.

If the selection test accurately assesses giftedness and academic ability of a child, there should be a strong correlation between entry test scores and their academic performance in the early years of high school. Do you collect such data and have you seen such correlation

We in the High Performing Students Team have not been able to conduct research of this nature as we are regrettably fully occupied with the logistics of the two placement programs. It is also difficult to plan such research as the academic performance of gifted students is not easily captured by the other statewide tests such as NAPLAN, where the ceiling of that test can be expected to be lower than that achievable by gifted students.

What is the correlation between IQ score and placement in selective school? Does a higher IQ score mean greater opportunity to get a placement?

Whenever research involving IQ and selective high school placement has been conducted either informally or through external avenues, IQ, thinking skills or general ability has the highest correlation with success in placement. The general ability test and now the thinking skills test have the highest overall weighting in the placement score. An early study by Professor Dianne Kenney also concluded that IQ was the single strongest determiner of placement in a selective high school or opportunity class.

What if they see different patterns than the test-makers designed - most gifted people are lateral thinkers? How do you account for this?

The questions are very rigorously trialled on similar students in other states and panelled by numbers of people within the test development company as well as by a large reference group of departmental personnel to ensure that given the multiple-choice options there can be only one correct answer.

Couldn't we have separate rooms for possible sick child?

Regrettably, students with all sorts of disabilities already require separate testing rooms in fairly large numbers. These have to be arranged in advance and the appropriate number of supervisors have to be employed and screened. We are not set up to be able to source separate rooms and supervisors at the last minute, should a child contract a contagious disease just before the test. Moreover, it is impossible to quarantine students with potential COVID infections to a single room. They would have to pass through the rest of the school to get to that room and could infect many people.

What if they have normal cold and have a negative Covid results- Will they be allowed in to sit the test?

If anyone is in that position they will have to call us and we will be able to ask relevant questions which will allow us to make a determination.

If I cannot go to the exam, and am ill, then do I have a make-up exam ?

This has not been a possibility while paper tests are involved but may be possible in the future if we transition to computer-based testing.

Shouldn't children who have been turned away be given documentation to prove that that indeed happened? Symptoms could crop up on that morning, and should "she said, he said" situations be avoided?

Anyone who suffers respiratory illness whether turned away or following the rules and not attending should go straight to their GP for treatment and confirmation that they had the relevant symptoms.

Research shows that girls tend to underperform in test situations, will you take this into account?

The test questions are carefully trialled on similar students in other states and panelled by numbers of people within the test development company to try to overcome any such disadvantage. In addition, the department has practice tests to ensure that all students, regardless of gender or background can become familiar with the format and content of this kind of testing and can develop their test-taking skills.

Would a recent negative COVID test allow them to enter the test with flu like symptoms?

If anyone is in that position they will have to call us and we will be able to ask relevant questions which will allow us to make a determination.

What is the difference in GA and thinking skills?

The general ability test focused more on pattern recognition and presented many items that were context free but relied on measuring students' abstract and non-verbal abilities as well as other domains of ability. The thinking skills test is much more heavily context-based and seeks to measure areas such as logical thinking.

If we decide to get Y5 student (y5 in 2022) to do the selective test and it turns out as unsuccessful, does it have any negative impacts when they do the test a year later?

Yes, selection committees have the discretion to decide whether students who are exposed to the test in the previous year have been unduly advantaged. It is expected that the only students who take the test while they are in Year 5 are those whose schools genuinely believe they should be accelerated.

Are you concerned that children with low Socio-Educational Advantage background are underrepresented in selective schools and what should be done to level the playing field for them?

This is of great concern and has been called out in the 2018 Review of Selective Access (details available on our web site.) There is a whole stream of work being dedicated to determining strategies which may redress this imbalance.

Are the offers made in rounds? I.e. what if your child misses out on their first choice but doesn't get accepted for their second choice - not because they didn't score highly enough, but because all offers to that second school were accepted in the first round of offers to students who put that second school as their first choice?

Only first round offers are made in rounds. Thereafter, as offers are declined in each school, fresh offers are made every day. State wide around one-third of all offers are declined. We have never had a situation where a selective high school had all first-round offers accepted. But overall, the order you make your choices matters because you will receive an offer only to the highest choice for which your child qualifies.

Is there any information about what level each of the schools cut off at?

No, in previous years the score of the last student placed at each selective high school was published at the end of Term 1 in the year after the test. For Year 7 entry in 2022 discussions are still taking place about what relative score will be published. Even if the decision is to keep publishing the minimum entry score, because the possible total score has changed, there is no comparability between the score to be published next year and those published previously.

Is the writing test done in pen or pencil?

Pencil

Do students from opportunity class have a greater chance of getting a placement in the selective school

Given that students undergo a very similar selection process for opportunity class and selective high school placement, students in an opportunity class have a good chance of getting into a selective school provided (1) that there is one available (we have 78 OC schools and only 48 selective high schools and they are not all in the same locations) (2) provided the parents maximise their chances by making more than one choice. However, students who may not have been successful for opportunity class placement should not hesitate to apply for selective high school placement as students develop their abilities and skills at different rates and they may now be at the required ability level.

Does a student's hand writing affect the writing marking?

No. There are no marks for handwriting.

However, while the test is paper-based, the handwriting has to be sufficiently legible for the markers to read it.

What can students bring into the exam e.g. ruler, protractor, watch ?

Nothing except a pencil and water in a clear plastic bottle. Only watches that tell time and do nothing else and are set not to make a sound are allowed.

You will be sent a list of materials when your child receives their test centre information.

Are pencils and rubbers provided?

No

When will the minimal entry score for each SHS for 2021 exam be available on your website?

In April 2022.