

Board of Senior Secondary Studies

ACT Scaling Test

Student Information Booklet

2024

This booklet is intended for students who will be taking the ACT Scaling Test (AST).

It explains rules and requirements, what the test is like, how it is developed, and what can be done as preparation.



ACT
Government

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction to the AST..... | 1 |
| Timetable – ACT Scaling Test (AST) 2024 First Sitting | 2 |
| Equipment which you must provide for yourself | 3 |
| Conditions for Candidates of the AST | 5 |
| Prior to the Test | 6 |
| During the Test..... | 6 |
| Late arrival, early departure, or temporary absence from the test venue | 7 |
| Minimum Requirements | 7 |
| Copying/Cheating..... | 7 |
| Illness before or during the test – Second Sitting Application Requirements | 8 |
| Special Provisions Consideration | 10 |
| Students from a Linguistically Diverse Background (LD) | 10 |
| Second Sitting | 11 |
| Understanding the AST | 12 |
| 1 The Nature of the ACT Scaling Test | 12 |
| 2 How the AST is developed | 14 |
| 3 How AST Scores are used | 14 |
| 4 Preparation and method of answering questions - Short Response Test..... | 15 |
| 5 Preparation and method of answering questions - Multiple Choice | 17 |
| 6 Preparation and method of answering questions - Writing Task..... | 18 |

It is important that you read this booklet carefully and ask your AST Coordinator if you do not understand any of the information contained in the booklet.

Introduction to the AST

This booklet is intended for students who will be taking the ACT Scaling Test (AST). It explains rules and requirements, what the test is like, how it is developed, and what can be done as preparation.

The test aims to measure a range of general skills that are seen to be relevant to success in a variety of school subjects and to further education, particularly tertiary studies.

The test consists of:

- Short Response Test
- Multiple Choice Test
- Writing Task.

On the Board of Senior Secondary Studies website

(http://www.bsss.act.edu.au/information_for_students/act_scaling_test) you will find examples of some of the types of questions that appear in the AST, together with an explanation of the kind of reasoning that could be involved in determining the correct or best answer to each question.

Because the AST measures skills of a general nature, the material in the AST looks different from year to year, even though a similar set of skills is measured.

Timetable – ACT Scaling Test (AST) 2024 First Sitting

DAY ONE - Tuesday 3 September 2024

School Coordinators will determine when students should begin to enter the venue

Morning Session – Short Response Test

- 8.35 am Candidates must be seated and ready for the test
- 8.35 am Short Response Booklets distributed face up on desks
- 8.40 am Instructions read to candidates. Candidates check that the personal details printed on the cover of the Short Response booklet are correct.
- 8.50 am Reading time commences. Supervisors continue to check that each student has the correct booklet. Supervisors check that dictionaries do not contain a thesaurus.
- 9.00 am Test commences**
- 11:00 am Test concludes**
- 11:20 am LD Extra Time Concludes*

If you leave the premises after the Short Response Test it is your responsibility to ensure you are back in time for the next test. Failure to do so is not a justification to sit the Second Sitting.

Afternoon Session – Multiple Choice Test

- 12.25 pm Answer sheets distributed
- 12.35 pm Candidates must be seated and ready for the test
- 12.35 pm Instructions read to candidates. Candidates check personal information section on answer sheet. Supervisors check that each student has the correct answer sheet.
- 12.45 pm Question booklets distributed, face up
- 12.50 pm Reading time commences. Supervisors continue checking that each student has the correct answer sheet.
- 1.00 pm Test commences**
- 3.15 pm Test concludes**
- 3:40 pm LD Extra Time Concludes*

DAY TWO - Wednesday 4 September 2024

Morning Session – Writing Task

- 9.10 am Answer booklets distributed
- 9.20 am Candidates must be seated and ready for the test
- 9.20 am Question papers distributed
- 9.25 am Instructions read to candidates. Candidates check that they have the answer booklet with their name and ID printed. Note there is **no** reading time in the Writing Task.
- 9.30 am Test commences**
- 12.00 pm Test concludes**
- 12:25 pm LD Extra Time Concludes*

Equipment which you must provide for yourself

| | Essential Equipment | Recommended Equipment |
|---|--|---|
| Short Response Test | Pens or Biro Ruler (clean) ID card | Pencils (2B, B or HB) Erasers Pencil sharpeners Whiteout or equivalent Dictionary in book form without a thesaurus (any language or bilingual) Clear unlabelled bottle of water |
| Multiple Choice Test | Pencils (2B, B or HB) Eraser Pencil sharpener Ruler (clean) ID card Note: Pens cannot be used to mark the answer sheet for the Multiple Choice Test. | Highlighter pens Dictionary in book form without a thesaurus (any language or bilingual) Clear unlabelled bottle of water |
| Writing Task | Pens or Biro ID card | Pencils Erasers Pencil sharpeners Whiteout or equivalent Highlighter pens Dictionary in book form without a thesaurus (any language or bilingual) Ruler (clean) Clear unlabelled bottle of water |
| It is your responsibility to bring the required equipment to each of the tests | | |
| All equipment brought into the test centre is subject to inspection | | |

Prohibited items include the following:

- Mobile phones
- All electronic devices (e.g. calculators of any kind, smart watches, iPods etc.)
- Electronic dictionary of any kind (including spellchecker, thesaurus, and word count on a computer)
- Dictionaries with additional features (e.g. illustrations, diagrams, annotations, thesaurus-like features)
- Thesaurus
- Scanner pen (unless approved under Special Provisions)
- Post-it-notes
- Bag or handbag, including large opaque pencil cases
- Food (unless approved under Special Provisions)

Note: For information relating to **headwear** see **Conditions for Candidates for the AST No.14** (Pg. 5).

Schools will arrange a suitable location for the storage of your bags, handbags, smart watches, mobile phones, or any other valuables prior to entering the test centre.

Spot Checks

Dictionaries must not have loose pages, papers, or extra writing in them. Rulers must be clean and without a calculator attached. Dictionaries, pencil cases and rulers may be spot checked by supervisors during the tests. Supervisors may not allow some kinds of pencil cases at your desk.

Use of unauthorised equipment

The Supervisor-in-Charge will inform you that the rules of the test have been breached, but you will be allowed to complete the test.

The Supervisor-in-Charge will provide a written report of the incident to the Office of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

Prohibited or unauthorised materials or equipment will be confiscated.

Any resulting actions with respect to the AST are the responsibility of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS), and not the college at which the test is being administered.

Conditions for Candidates of the AST

1. A student must apply to be a candidate for the AST on the designated form.
2. Each candidate is required to attend all three components of the AST in person. It is an offence for a candidate to allow any other person to attend the AST in her or his place.
3. A candidate must make a serious attempt at all three components of the AST. (See *Minimum Requirements* as outlined on Page 7 of this Booklet.)
4. A candidate must obey instructions/directions given in the test centre by a supervisor.
5. No candidate will be permitted to leave the test centre at any session until the test is complete and all papers have been collected.
6. A candidate who leaves the test centre temporarily will not be allowed to return unless a supervisor has accompanied her/him during the entire period of the absence.
7. A candidate who is unable to attend any session of the AST due to illness must notify the college and obtain a medical certificate within 24 hours, except in exceptional circumstances. Certificates should be delivered to the college by Friday of AST week.
8. A candidate arriving late for the AST will be admitted to the test centre provided they arrive before 30 minutes has elapsed from the scheduled commencement of writing time.
9. Candidates only commence writing, and must cease writing, when given the instruction to do so.
10. No candidate may communicate with any person other than a supervisor during the AST.
11. No candidate may cheat, give false information, or assist another candidate to cheat or take any action that gives or attempts to give them an unfair advantage in the AST.
12. Unless there are special circumstances approved in advance by the BSSS a candidate may not take any bags, containers, books, notes, paper, or any equipment other than the authorised equipment into the test centre.
13. Computerised watches, electronic organisers, electronic dictionaries, mobile phones, and other electronic devices capable of storing text or transmitting or receiving information or electronic signals may not be taken into the test centre.
14. Only headwear worn for religious or cultural reasons as part of your usual attire when attending school, or for approved medical reasons supported by evidence can be worn during the test. All other headwear should be removed and stored with your possessions before entering the test centre. If a hood is attached to clothing, the hood must not be placed on your head.
15. A candidate must not remove any answer booklet or sheet, used or unused, or any Multiple-Choice Test question booklet, or part thereof, from the test centre.
16. A candidate is permitted to take a clear, unlabelled bottle of water into the test centre.
17. Under no circumstances are alcoholic drinks or other intoxicating substances allowed in the test centre. No foods or drinks other than water are allowed except under approved circumstances.
18. A candidate will not be admitted to a test centre while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
19. No candidate shall by any act or omission cause any nuisance, annoyance or interference to any other candidate or a supervisor. Candidates who behave inappropriately may be requested to leave the test centre and denied access to the test.

The Supervisor will report any alleged breach of these conditions in writing to the BSSS.

If a breach is found to have occurred actions can include a reprimand, cancellation of AST results, a reduction in the candidate's ATAR or being deemed ineligible for a Tertiary Entrance Statement.

Your application to sit the AST contains a statement to the effect that you have read and agree to abide by the above conditions.

Prior to the Test

- When instructed to enter the test centre, you should find your allocated seat without delay and should not leave that seat except with the permission of, or at the direction of, the Supervisor-in-Charge or a Supervisor.
- Possession of any forbidden items (e.g. mobile phones or smart watches/activity trackers) during the test **will be regarded as cheating** and may result in penalties.
- Do not touch any material on your desk until told to do so.
- You are required to have a **current photographic identity** card, issued by your college. In some circumstances other photographic identity cards can be used. If in doubt check with your college AST coordinator. You should place your ID card on your desk near the label.
- If you have an analogue watch, you will also be asked to place that on the front corner of your desk. See also **Conditions for Candidates of the AST item 13**.
- Check details printed on test booklets, answer sheets or booklets carefully and raise your hand if there are any errors.
- You will be provided with some draft/working paper for each test, which you can use if you wish. More paper is available from the supervisors if required.
- You will be given 10 minutes reading time for the Short Response paper and the Multiple-Choice paper. No reading time is available for the Writing Task. During this time, you should check that the test papers are printed correctly (i.e., no missing pages, text and diagrams are legible etc.)
- You must not write, or mark anything, until given the instruction to commence work.

During the Test

- During the test, you are not permitted to talk to or otherwise communicate with any other candidate, or any person other than a designated AST supervisor.
- If at any time during the test you wish to speak to a supervisor, you should signal by raising your hand.
- If you need to go to the toilet a supervisor must accompany you. If you need a specific toilet (e.g., gender neutral), ensure that you know where this is located prior to sitting the AST.
- You will not be permitted to go to the toilet in the last 20 minutes of test time unless you have relevant Special Provisions.
- **A candidate who leaves the test centre temporarily will not be allowed to return unless a supervisor has accompanied them during the entire period of the absence.** You should raise your hand and wait for a supervisor.
- If you need any kind of food, or a drink other than water, during the test you **MUST** apply for Special Provisions Consideration— see your Coordinator.
- You should comply with all reasonable directions given by a Supervisor-in-Charge, Supervisor or AST Coordinator. If the Supervisor-in-Charge is satisfied that you have failed to comply with any reasonable direction, **the Supervisor-in-Charge may expel you from the test centre.**
- No one is permitted to leave any test until the test papers have been collected at the conclusion of the test.
- At the conclusion of all tests, when requested, you must immediately stop writing and put your pen/pencil down. There should be no talking until all papers are collected. Please remain seated until all procedures have been completed and you are told to leave.

Late arrival, early departure, or temporary absence from the test venue

- You will not be admitted to the test room later than 30 minutes after the start of the test (40 minutes after the start of reading time for the Short Response and Multiple-Choice tests). Students arriving within this time may commence the test but **will not be granted extra time**.
- If you have a **very good reason** for being late, **for which independent evidence exists**, (e.g. car accident) discuss this with the AST Coordinator before starting the test as it may be more appropriate to apply for the Second Sitting - **permission for which is not granted automatically but must be applied for, with evidence**.
- Such things as sleeping in or missing a bus are not regarded as acceptable reasons for being more than 30 minutes late or missing a test.
- If you seek permission to leave the room temporarily, e.g. to use the toilet or because of illness, you must be accompanied at all times during your absence by a supervisor. Otherwise, you will not be re-admitted.
- No extra time will be given for a temporary absence, unless specified in writing prior to the test, as a result of an application for special provisions consideration.
- If you leave the premises after the Short Response Test it is your responsibility to ensure you are back in time for the next test. **Failure to do so is not a justification to sit the Second Sitting**.

Minimum Requirements

An AST result will be awarded only if you make a **serious attempt** at **all three components** of the test, including:

- Making an original and substantial response to the stimulus material, of a **minimum of 200 words** in the Writing Task
- Making an original and substantial response to questions worth **at least half** of the total allocated marks in the Short Response Test
- responding to questions without any apparent systematic selection or strings of choice and answering at least half of the questions in the Multiple Choice Test.

Copying/Cheating

You are not allowed to cheat or attempt to cheat during any session of the test. For the purposes of the test, cheating is defined as any action intended to assist you to gain an unfair advantage over other candidates or otherwise to defeat the purpose of the test.

Such actions include, but are not limited to:

- Copying from another candidate
- Gaining prior access to the content of the test
- Impersonation or asking another person to impersonate you
- Altering response sheets or response booklets
- Bringing documents into the test centre, such as a prepared essay
- Bringing unauthorised equipment into the test centre (e.g. mobile phone, smart watch)
- Communicating with another candidate, orally, in writing, electronically, by tapping or by any other method
- Giving false information
- Writing before commencement time or after finishing time.

During any session of the test, you should cover your answers as much as possible, to prevent other candidates from having the opportunity to copy/cheat. If you finish the Multiple-Choice paper early, you should turn your answer sheet face down.

Illness before or during the test – Second Sitting Application Requirements

- The Second Sitting Application Form consists of **Part 1** (The Application) and **Part 2** (A Confidential Medical Report) – BOTH parts are REQUIRED. **Part 1/Pg. 2 MUST be filled in by THE APPLICANT**
- In all cases of illness, before or during the test, the Confidential Medical Report must be obtained **within 24 hours**.
- A statement that “student x has a medical condition”, or a ticked box on a certificate, is **NOT sufficient**. The report must specify what the medical condition was that prevented you from sitting the test
- Medical Reports **MUST include the date of the consultation**
- Supervisors are not permitted to recommend or administer medication of any kind unless permission has been granted prior to the test. If medication may be required, it is recommended that an application is made for Special Provisions Consideration so this can occur.

Illness before the test

If you are unable to attend any session of the AST (first sitting) due to illness, you must notify the college, seek medical attention, and get Part 2 of the Second Sitting Application (Confidential Medical Report) filled in by the Doctor, within 24 hours of that test session, except in exceptional circumstances. You should then apply for approval to sit the second sitting for the paper(s) concerned.

If you are genuinely ill prior to the commencement of any test **do not attempt the test**. Please consult the AST Coordinator or the Supervisor-in-Charge if you are unsure.

N.B: If you are advised not to sit the paper but choose to do so you will NOT be eligible for the Second Sitting or any form of compensation in the marking of that test.

If you are too ill to attempt the test, you should:

- Not attempt the paper
- Seek medical attention and get Part 2 of the Second Sitting Application (Confidential Medical Report) filled in within 24 hours. **Medical Reports obtained outside the 24 hours will not usually be accepted**
- **Apply for approval** to attend the Second Sitting for the paper/s concerned – contact your college AST Coordinator.

You will be permitted to sit the Second Sitting provided an application is made by the due date **with appropriate documentation**. A signed Incident Report will be completed by the Supervisor-in-Charge where relevant. Each Application will be assessed on its merit.

Temporary illness during any sitting of the AST

If you become ill in any of the sessions, and the illness is of a temporary nature such that a short, supervised absence from the test room may result in a cure, then such absence should be permitted, but there will be no extension of time granted. **Supervisors-in-Charge and Supervisors are advised not to recommend or administer medication of any kind**. You may return to the test, provided that supervision has occurred throughout the period of absence. Any such absences will be noted by a supervisor in an Incident Report, with a brief written explanation. There will be no extension of time granted.

Illness during any sitting of the AST

If you become ill **during** any AST paper at the first or second sitting:

- you must inform the Supervisor-in-Charge at the test centre you are ill, **whether the paper is completed or not**, before leaving the test centre
- you will be allowed to leave the test centre if necessary
- an Incident Report will be submitted by the Supervisor-in-Charge
- you **must** seek medical attention, and get **Part 2** of the Second Sitting Application (Confidential Medical Report) filled in within 24 hours and this must be received by the school AST Coordinator by the Friday of AST test week
- Part 1 – The Second Sitting Application – is also required
- if you wish to apply for the Second Sitting you must apply by the due date.

Illness during the Multiple Choice and Short Response Tests

- if you become ill during a Short Response or Multiple-Choice paper you will be permitted to sit any of the remaining other tests at the first sitting
- you will NOT be allowed to sit an uncompleted paper at the Second Sitting, no matter how brief the contact has been
- if you suddenly become ill after starting the test inform the Supervisor-in-Charge before leaving the test centre. Do not attempt any subsequent tests at this sitting if you are still unwell. You will need to obtain the appropriate medical report and submit by the due date.

Illness during the Writing Task (First Sitting)

- if you become ill and are unable to complete the Writing Task, or feel your performance was seriously affected by sudden illness, you should apply for the Writing Task component of the Second Sitting. You will need to obtain the appropriate medical report and submit by the due date.

Misadventure before any session of the AST

Misadventure is defined as an unforeseen mishap, calamity, or disaster. If an event, such as a death in the family, prevents you from attending a sitting of the AST, you or your representative must notify the school immediately. **Official, independent documentation of such an event** must be provided to the school as soon as possible and must accompany any request for permission to sit the second sitting or for special treatment (e.g. Car accident on way to the test – signed and dated statement from NRMA person or police would be acceptable).

Medical Certificates for Students applying for the Second Sitting

If you miss one or more of the components of the first sitting of the AST because of illness, or feel your performance was seriously affected by illness arising during the test, you **must** get the appropriate **medical report** within 24 hours of the test. **This, and the Second Sitting Application** must be delivered to the college concerned by Friday of the week the AST is held. **Speak to your school AST Coordinator.**

Special Provisions Consideration

1. Students who have a disability, impairment, or medical condition, who wish to apply for Special Provisions consideration, **must discuss this with the college AST Coordinator**
2. Any application for Special Provisions consideration must be accompanied by **current, relevant documentary evidence**
3. While decisions for each application are based on the individual situation and current supporting documentation provided, every effort is made to be consistent across all schools
4. In some situations, because of the different requirements for the AST, Special Provisions may not be granted for the AST, even though consideration may have been granted by the school for school-based assessment
5. In some situations, different provisions from that applied for will be granted
6. **All decisions regarding eligibility for Special Provisions in the AST are the sole responsibility of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies** and because of the nature of the AST some support given for college assessment may not be relevant/ granted for the AST
7. Late applications for Special Provisions which would necessitate approval to sit the AST at the Second Sitting are unlikely to be approved where the disability, impairment or medical condition is a long term one and the application could reasonably have been submitted by the due date in March. (See below)

Students from a Linguistically Diverse Background (LD)

Students who meet the BSSS' definition as from a Linguistically Diverse Background (LD) can access extra time. All students who are applying for LD status need to complete an **application for LD status** through their school in addition to the Application to sit the AST.

If you have been approved for LD status you will be seated with other LD students in a separate area and will have extra time for each test. All students will sit the same papers.

Short Response Test

Standard time of two hours with an extra 20 minutes available to complete the paper. The number of questions to be answered will be stated clearly on the front page and you should answer all questions in the booklet.

Multiple Choice Test

Standard time of two hours and 15 minutes with an extra 25 minutes available to answer 80 questions.

Writing Task

Standard time of 2 hours and 30 minutes with an extra 25 minutes available. Your Writing Task will be marked using the same criteria as for other students.

Second Sitting

The second sitting is provided for students who are unable to attend the first sitting, due to illness, misadventure, or other **exceptional circumstances**.

Approval to attend the second sitting will not be granted automatically and only relevant Officers in the Office of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies can approve eligibility.

You must discuss an application for the Second Sitting with your AST Co-ordinator. If you know in advance that you will not be able to attend the main sitting of the AST, **you MUST receive approval for the Second Sitting in advance.**

Do NOT assume approval will be granted, under any circumstances.

Understanding the AST

1 The Nature of the ACT Scaling Test

The AST contains three papers — a 120-minute Short Response Test, a 135-minute Multiple-Choice Test containing 80 questions, and a 150-minute Writing Task: (See also Students from a Linguistically Diverse Background)

(i) The Short Response Test

The Short Response Test is included so that a wider range of intellectual skills and processes can be assessed. The questions are designed to measure the skills and processes of comprehension and interpretation, analysis and synthesis of information, critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving and evaluation and response. They provide opportunities for you to demonstrate lateral and creative thinking and visual literacy.

Ten minutes of reading time is allowed – it is strongly recommended you use this time productively.

The time allowed for the test will be 120 minutes. The total mark for the paper will be out of 50. This means you have over 2 minutes per mark. The number of questions and the marks allocated to each question in the test will vary, but the mark indicated in brackets for each question will indicate the proportion of time appropriate to each question.

The written answers range from a word to a phrase, to a sentence or a number of sentences. The space provided for answers also gives an indication of the length of response expected.

Although the answers are written, this is not a test of your control of language. It is a test of the substance and quality of your reasoning and thinking, and of your ability to explain and justify points of view with precision. Answers should be written clearly and legibly so as to communicate understanding as well as possible. Spelling and punctuation will not be assessed in this paper. Answers can be given in dot points, if appropriate.

Note: You must make an original and substantial response to questions worth at least half of the total allocated marks in the Short Response Test.

(ii) The AST Multiple-Choice Test

Ten minutes of reading time is allowed – it is strongly recommended you use this time productively

The multiple-choice questions are grouped into sets or units, each based on a piece of stimulus material. The stimulus material may be a prose passage, a graph, a table containing words or numbers, a poem, a picture or a map, or a combination of these. Any specific information required to answer the questions is contained in the stimulus material or in the questions that follow.

The material is drawn from the areas of humanities, social sciences, sciences, and mathematics, but is not aimed at subject specialists and is designed to be accessible to all senior students.

The questions are intended to test general reasoning skills, including ability to comprehend information, make plausible inferences, apply deductive reasoning, analyse data, translate information from one form to another, make evaluations, apply quantitative skills, and solve problems.

Note: You must answer at least half of the questions and respond without any apparent systematic selection or strings of choice.

(iii) The AST Writing Task

The AST Writing Task includes stimulus material that may include text, cartoons, charts, or graphs, which present various views of a particular issue. Your task is to write a persuasive argument of about 600 words in response.

The paper itself gives directions about how you should undertake this task. You can react to all or some of the material presented, and you can agree or disagree with any of it. You should aim to present a clear argument and must not write anything frivolous or objectionable.

You have two and a half hours, and this should allow you plenty of time for planning, drafting, re-drafting, and editing your work. You should budget at least 30 minutes for the final written version of your response. It is expected that you complete the final version in the time given. There is no specified reading time in the Writing Task.

Note: You must make an original and substantial response to the stimulus, of a minimum of 200 words. **Do not cut and paste material from the stimulus.** Responses significantly exceeding 600 words may not be read in full by markers.

All students must meet the Minimum Requirements (Page 6) of all three components of the test.

2 How the AST is developed

Material for the ACT Scaling Test is developed by staff from the Australian Council for Educational Research who have experience in both test construction and teaching at the secondary level. This material, including all suggested questions, answers and alternatives is subjected to prolonged panel discussions.

As a result of this panelling process, ambiguities, unwarranted assumptions, logical flaws, and subjective notions are removed.

After panel discussions, the multiple-choice unit is edited and prepared for preliminary or trial testing. To produce a final test of 80 multiple choice questions, approximately three times that number are trial tested with Year 12 students. From the trials, data are obtained on the difficulty level and statistical performance of each question. These data provide a guide to the selection of the final 80 questions for the test. The final set of multiple-choice questions is selected by ACER staff in consultation with representatives of the Office of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies. The outcome is a test of 80 questions with suitable statistical properties covering an appropriate range of skills.

For the Short Response Test preliminary units are prepared and edited after panel discussion. The final set of questions is selected after consultation with representatives from the Office of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

Note: Despite repeated quality control loops in the production of the test material, error free material can never be absolutely guaranteed.

3 How AST Scores are used

Each candidate receives a total AST score calculated from the Short Response Test, Multiple-Choice Test (verbal and quantitative components) and the Writing Task results. Candidates' total AST scores are used by the BSSS in the process of scaling students' course scores as supplied by the colleges. The term 'scaling' refers to the adjustment of candidates' scores to obtain scores that are comparable across different courses and across different colleges, which can thus be incorporated into a single Tertiary Entrance Score. The scaling process does not alter the ranking of students as supplied by the colleges. For example, if you are seventh in the college's ranking in a course, your scaled score will be seventh when all of the scores awarded to students in that course are rescaled.

AST scores are used for scaling course scores. They do not contribute directly to the aggregate score that is used for determining an ATAR.

In the ACT, AST scores are standardised before they are used for scaling. This ensures that the system distribution of scores is similar each year, regardless of whether raw test marks are higher or lower than in previous years.

If you are intending to obtain an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) you must sit the AST. If you are ever likely to apply to undertake tertiary education, your Australian Tertiary Admission Rank will be considered, amongst other information, by admissions officers at universities.

4 Preparation and method of answering questions - Short Response Test

(i) Preparation

For this test a good general knowledge and opinions on current issues could be helpful. Most of the skills required should be integral to Year 11 and 12 courses. Preparation could include reading newspapers, listening to news and current affairs programs with the view to interpreting what has been said, expressing your own opinions and justifying them in some manner, by logic or examples. Reading and interpreting diagrams, graphs and tables published in a variety of contexts could also be of use.

Most of the skills and processes required for the Short Response Test should be familiar in that they are the types of skills and processes that could be expected to be part of most lessons.

The major elements of the Short Response Test can be represented by the following types of questions:

Comprehending and interpreting – for example:

- What view of ... is presented in this material?
- What is suggested/ implied about ... in this material?
- Explain how/why ... happens.

Dealing with information – for example:

- What does this data/information reveal/mean?
- Identify information/data/a variable/evidence of type.
- Apply information/data of type
- How could this be presented in another way/summarised?
- Classify on the basis of

Thinking critically – for example:

- What view is presented here?
- How is this view presented?
- How is this view supported?
- How strong or convincing is this view?

Drawing conclusions – for example:

- What is the relationship between ... and ...?
- What is a reasonable conclusion/hypothesis/prediction to draw from this data?
- Evaluate this evidence/information/claim/experimental design.
- In order to draw this conclusion, what additional information is needed?
- Justify/Counter the claim that ...
- What is the line of reasoning?
- What is the flaw/assumption in the line of reasoning?

Solving Problems – for example:

- How does/should this work?
- What is it meant to do?
- What is the problem?
- What is a suitable/optimal solution/answer/strategy/improvement/design?
- What would happen if ...?
- Evaluate these potential solutions.
- Can this be solved with what is available?
- What else do you need to know/do/discover to solve the problem?

Evaluating and responding – for example:

- What is presented in this material?
- What is the purpose of this material?
- How is it presented?
- What impressions do you have of this?
- How do you think and feel about this?
- What is your view of this?
- How would you explain and justify your view?

(ii) Method of answering questions

Answers will be written in the test booklet, in the spaces provided. You do not have to fill the entire space, but the space and the marks available together indicate the approximate required length of your answer. Answers can be in point form unless otherwise directed. Answers should be in pen or biro.

It is worth noting that each question does not necessarily have a unique answer. There may be alternative responses that are of an equally high standard.

5 Preparation and method of answering questions - Multiple Choice

(i) Preparation

The skills that the AST measures are believed to develop gradually as a result of a variety of experiences, of which formal schooling is one important element. Your best preparation is to read widely and to think critically.

The sample questions on the BSSS website have been provided only to give you some idea of the types of questions set in the AST. By working through these questions, you will become familiar with some of the types of material that may be presented and gain experience in dealing with such material in order to arrive at the answers.

Practice on objective test questions, such as those provided by your college and on the BSSS website, can do only a little to improve your score. In addition, available evidence suggests that specific coaching (as distinct from practice) for tests such as the AST, has little effect because these tests focus on skills of a general nature, developed over a long period of time, and are not readily improved by a quick coaching course.

(ii) Method of answering questions

Detailed information regarding the method of recording answers to the multiple-choice questions in the AST test will be printed on the question booklet. You will be required to mark your answers on a special answer sheet that is provided separately from the AST question booklet.

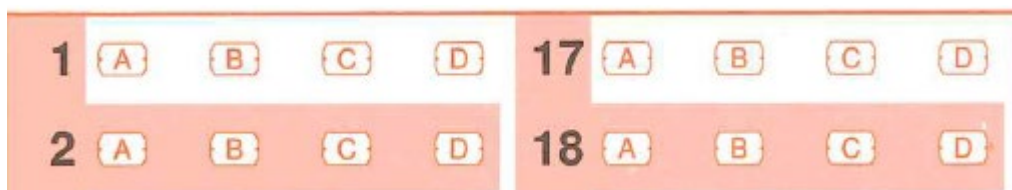
The answer sheets are marked by an optical scanning machine. This machine 'senses' marks made on the answer sheet by a standard 2B pencil and converts this information into a form that can be processed by a computer.

It is recommended that you bring at least two 2B pencils and an eraser.

The pencil must make a dark mark but should not smudge.

DO NOT USE A BALL-POINT OR INK PEN ON THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE ANSWER SHEET

For each question a choice of four suggested answers is given. On the answer sheet, these suggested answers are represented by the letters **A B C D**, each printed inside an enclosing shape as shown in the example below.



You must carefully read each question and its suggested answers. Having decided which answer is correct or best, you should indicate your choice on the Multiple-Choice Answer Sheet. Instructions for marking responses are also printed on the Multiple-Choice Answer Sheet.

Only one answer per question should be marked. If the scanner reads more than one response for a question, it will mark it as "incorrect".

If it is necessary to change an answer, you should **completely erase the first mark** before another mark is inserted. It is desirable to avoid having to make erasures, for example, by not answering too hastily.

It is necessary to take care that the mark indicating the correct answer does not go outside the shape enclosing the letter and there are no stray marks or smudges on the answer sheet as this could invalidate the answer.

6 Preparation and method of answering questions - Writing Task

(i) Preparation

During your secondary education, you will have had a number of opportunities to prepare essays in various subjects. The task you are set as a candidate in the AST Writing Task gives you plenty of scope to demonstrate the skills you have acquired. You should have an idea of what will be assessed and see the task as an opportunity to meet these challenges in creative and powerful ways. The task will demand only one piece of writing and in one mode—a sustained, persuasive piece of writing in response to the stimulus material. The examiners will be looking at the quality and organisation of your ideas.

Criteria for the Writing Task

The extent to which the following are demonstrated:

- Thought and Content
- Structure and Organisation
- Expression, Style, and Mechanics

Accuracy of spelling is not a criterion.

Examiners will be looking for the following in your Writing Task response:

- a) Your choice of a major issue related to the material presented.
 - Have you been able to focus clearly on an issue?
 - Have you been able to make the importance of the issue clear?
 - Have you been able to show the relationship of your argument to the material presented?
- b) The coherence of your argument.
 - Does your argument have clear structure?
 - Do the parts of your argument develop from one another and hang together as a whole?
- c) The quality of your evidence or supporting arguments.
 - Have you been able to organise and use evidence or arguments to support your conclusion?
 - Is there a clear relationship between the discussion and the view presented?
 - Have you regurgitated stimulus material? This will result in poor scores
- d) Your control of language and form, including clarity, precision, and appropriateness for the target 'audience'.
 - Have you been able to express your ideas clearly and directly?
 - Have you made a persuasive argument which will have an impact on the reader?
 - Have you communicated effectively with your audience?
 - Have you edited effectively and polished your writing?

The use of a narrative form for the response is discouraged as it rarely allows for a demonstration of substantial and nuanced arguments.

(ii) Method of answering questions

You will be provided with a booklet of plain ruled paper in which to write your final response. Rough paper will be provided on which to do a draft. The final version should be written in **pen, not pencil**. You should allow sufficient time to draft and write the final version of your response.