

## Higher Education

### National curriculum to rate performance

Justine Ferrari, Education writer | *February 29, 2008*

**THE national curriculum will include benchmarks for student achievement in each subject as well as what children should be taught.**

National Curriculum Board chairman Barry McGaw envisages a program that sets out different levels of student performance linked to the national assessment system.

"You have to have something in the curriculum about what performance at different levels looks like," Professor McGaw said yesterday.

The first uniform national literacy and numeracy tests will be held in May for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and will replace a minimum benchmark standard with different levels of proficiency.

Professor McGaw was one of the architects of the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment that tests literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledge among 15-year-olds in 57 countries.

He said Australia's national assessment regime had to be linked to the curriculum, and the standards might need to be reconfigured once the national curriculum had been produced.

The 12-member board is charged by the Rudd Government with producing a national curriculum, from kindergarten through to the end of high school, for English, maths, history and the sciences.

It will be implemented in 2011.

The states and territories have already agreed to the development of nationally consistent curriculums, which Professor McGaw said was not the same as a national curriculum.

"There will be one national curriculum," he said. "In the past, the states and territories have agreed on the development of a curriculum framework to which they must sign up that they've aligned to their state curriculum.

"This will move that process on. I'm happy to use the plural and say national curricula if you mean one in maths, one in science, one in history and one in English."

The board is also set to enter the literacy wars, with Professor McGaw saying he believed the English curriculum would set out a position on the best way to teach reading and that literature was part of an English course.

"Literature is an integral part of English; I think that's clear," he said.

Professor McGaw said a division had arisen between English courses that separated literature for more advanced or tertiary-bound students, allowing less academic students to concentrate on language skills. As a result, some of the more complex skills of linking ideas out of a text had diminished, evidenced by the fall in reading scores among the nation's top students in the latest PISA results.

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