

Education
Queensland



Report of the Review of Guidance Officer Staffing

2000–2001



Queensland
Government
Education Queensland

State Schools:
shaping the Smart State

Overview

The report of the *Review of Guidance Officer Staffing: 2000-2001* relates to a review of guidance service delivery aspects that was undertaken by the Department of Education in 2000. The review considered the following matters:

- the roles of guidance officers and senior guidance officers
- guidance staffing allocations
- training, supervision and learning and development of guidance personnel.

In August 2001, the department provided in-principle endorsement to five recommendations that dealt with training and the allocation and distribution of guidance staff. The recommendations that received in-principle endorsement were:

- recommendations 7.4 d), e) and f) – Training for guidance and senior guidance officers
- recommendations 8.4 c) and e) – Staffing numbers and allocation of guidance officers.

Progress of recommendations that received in-principle endorsement

Training for Guidance and Senior Guidance Officers:

In 2003, 14 districts supported 37 teachers through mentoring, supervised practicum and skill development programs. Also in 2003, an on-line Supervision training program was developed for guidance and senior guidance officers. This program was delivered in Terms 2 and 3, 2004 with amendments made to the website and course in Term 4, 2004. Fifteen guidance personnel were supported by the Staff College to undertake this on-line program in 2004. From 2005, the Staff College, Inclusive Education and Disability Services Support Unit will provide induction for newly appointed senior guidance officers. Training requirements for guidance officer, senior guidance officer and behaviour management coordinator roles are being considered in 2005 under a project being undertaken by the department to investigate a range of issues relating to guidance officer, senior guidance officer and behaviour management coordinator roles. Further information regarding this initiative is outlined below.

Staffing Numbers and Allocation of Guidance Officers:

From the commencement of the 2004 school year, the base allocation of guidance positions was increased from 307 to 377 through the addition of 70 positions. The department is working with the Queensland Teachers' Union to address employment issues relating to staff members who are performing the guidance officer role.

Current initiatives regarding the roles of guidance officer, senior guidance officer and behaviour management coordinator

The department is currently investigating a range of issues relating to guidance officer, senior guidance officer and behaviour management coordinator roles. This project will build on the initial work undertaken in 2004 to investigate supply and demand issues in relation to specialist teaching positions. The current part of the project will focus on:

- the delivery of guidance and behaviour management coordination services in the context of the Education and Training Reforms for the Future reform agenda
- the range of local initiatives that have resulted in the creation of temporary guidance related roles
- the articulation, development and evaluation of guidance-related positions

- the preparation of position descriptions and work profiles
- the development of a regional allocative model for guidance-related staffing resources
- the implementation of HR policy to confirm officers into permanent positions
- the professional relationships between positions and linkages with other regional positions
- training requirements.

1.0 Purpose

This Review was commissioned in response to concerns raised by a range of stakeholders, including the Queensland Teachers' Union regarding guidance services in schools. The terms of reference for this Review were to consider:

- the current and future roles of guidance officers and senior guidance officers
- issues associated with the training, supervision, and learning and development of guidance officers
- the existing guidance officer staffing model and allocation.

2.0 Links to Queensland State Education 2010 (QSE–2010)

By virtue of their training and role, guidance officers are uniquely placed to assist schools in attaining QSE–2010 objectives through:

- establishing positive relationships with students and families
- providing counselling and high levels of social support to students and families in the face of social change
- ensuring appropriate individual pathways to work and further study through career guidance and counselling
- working with individuals and families to maximise the opportunities for students to achieve their personal best in schooling
- identifying and addressing issues which impede inclusiveness in schools
- advocating for individuals and groups who are at risk educationally
- supporting alternative education programs, early interventions in behaviour, and disability supports in schools
- providing a range of additional professional skills to the teaching expertise of schools
- collaborating and liaising with other agencies, and facilitating coordination of services
- assisting and supporting teachers and schools in dealing with unique student needs and behaviours
- maintaining networks with post-school institutions and trainers.

3.0 Background

Several major changes have impacted on guidance services in the past decade, particularly in relation to the number, allocation and training of guidance officers. Since 1993, the base number of guidance officer positions allocated by central office has remained constant at 307 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. However, within the previous regional structure, a number of additional guidance officers were employed in response to the demands of school communities. These additional guidance officers were employed using discretionary funding allocated to regions. In 1998, with the change to a district structure, the discretionary funding was removed and the previous mechanisms for employing these additional guidance officers no longer existed. These supplementary positions have been maintained since 1998 in response to the demands of school communities.

In 1998 the Queensland Teachers' Union sought assurances from the then Shadow Minister for Education, Mr Steve Bredhauer, about the future of the existing extra guidance positions above the official allocative number of 307. In June 1998, Mr Bredhauer responded that:

'On the basis of my understanding of the employment conditions and that no additional cost would be involved in continuing these positions I wish to indicate that the Labor Party in Government will maintain these guidance officers in their schools.'

In June 1999, the Queensland Teachers' Union asked for clarification on a number of guidance staffing issues. The Union was informed by the former Director, Human Resources that the department was investigating the feasibility of formally increasing the statewide number of guidance positions to reflect the actual number employed, and of implementing a fixed student–guidance officer ratio. This proposal did not encompass increasing guidance positions above the number employed at that time. This proposal was embodied in the 'Draft staffing model: Students with learning needs 2000–2002', which did not subsequently gain endorsement.

At a Senior Officers Liaison Meeting in early 2000, the Director-General of Education, Mr Terry Moran indicated to Union representatives that guidance officer staffing issues would be reviewed. As a consequence, in October 2000 a review of guidance officer staffing was commissioned by the Assistant Director-General, Schools (Central Southern) in response to QTU concerns about guidance officer staffing and other key stakeholders' concerns about a number of issues, including difficulties in transferring guidance officers, and ensuring equitable guidance staffing across the state.

A reference group and terms of reference were established. The reference group was comprised of representatives from the Queensland Association of State School Principals, Queensland Secondary Principals' Association, Association of Special Education Administrators Qld, Queensland Teachers' Union, Queensland Public Sector Union, Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association, and a number of departmental representatives.

4.0 Statement of Issues

Guidance work in schools has been significantly affected by accelerating societal change. Families are experiencing more complex issues due to the negative effects of long-term unemployment, mobility and fragmentation of family structure, reduced social cohesion and support, poverty, drug use, and domestic violence.

For students, these social problems:

- contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, suicide and self-harming behaviours
- exacerbate learning difficulties and inappropriate behaviours
- reduce academic motivation.

Thus the number and proportion of 'top of the triangle' students who are disturbed and/or disruptive has increased, and so too have schools' and families' needs for support with these issues. Schools are often the first base in addressing a range of welfare issues, and this has expanded with greater student retention. Ongoing high levels of youth unemployment, and the increasing range and complexity of pathways to further education, training and employment have also contributed to the number and seriousness of issues which guidance officers address.

This changed and expanded guidance workload has raised the following questions:

- Should the role of guidance officers and senior guidance officers be redefined?

- Is the current guidance training model adequate to address the range and complexity of the tasks?
- How can guidance staff and services be equitably allocated and resourced to meet the needs of school communities across the state?

These three issues are addressed in succession. For each there is an analysis of the issue, its consequences and organisational risks, its resource implications, and the recommendations relevant to it.

5.0 Methodology

In gathering information and clarifying the issues, the following procedures were used:

- survey of guidance officers and their line managers about current and preferred guidance services
- literature and document review
- focus groups and email discussion lists for guidance officers
- collation of data concerning guidance training, and information concerning guidance allocations, transfers and staffing into a background paper
- circulation of the Background Paper and Issues Paper to a broad range of stakeholders for comment
- collation and detailed analysis of submissions.

6.0 Guidance Officer and Senior Guidance Officer Roles

6.1 Guidance officer and senior guidance officer roles: Analysis of issues

The survey of guidance officers and senior guidance officers confirmed the major tasks of guidance work as counselling, assessment and ascertainment, career counselling, behaviour, and learning needs. While counselling and behavioural issues were major tasks in both primary and secondary settings, there were significant differences between primary and secondary guidance work in careers counselling and administrative duties (major tasks in secondary but not in primary), and ascertainment and learning needs (major tasks in primary but not in secondary). These findings support the assertion that the roles of primary and secondary guidance officers are substantially different.

Most guidance officers have been trained to work as either primary or secondary guidance officers. However, a number of small and rural districts require guidance officers to work from Preschool to Year 12 in order to meet the needs of their school communities. These P–12 guidance officers (about 20% of all guidance officers) cover the full range of guidance tasks to some degree, though generally by necessity rather than choice, and without formal training in all aspects of their role.

Submissions received in response to the issues paper generally supported the current focus of the guidance role in either the primary or secondary sector, and also recognised the needs of many districts for guidance officers to work in P–12 settings. (Other minority opinions proposed that all guidance officers should be trained in the full range of P–12 tasks, or that guidance officers should be given more specialist training.)

Schools and guidance officers report increases in the guidance workload across primary, secondary and P–12, particularly in ascertainment, counselling and

behaviour management. No task areas were identified as decreasing. A majority of schools and guidance officers have preferences for an increase in future services in counselling and professional support and supervision. Ascertainment in primary settings and travel in P-12 settings are the only tasks where the future preference is for a decrease.

At present guidance officers have difficulty in meeting all of the requirements that schools ask of them. This results in guidance officers increasingly taking a short-term reactive approach to system imperatives and urgent demands, at the expense of strategic proactive work in schools which would have positive outcomes in the longer term. This inability to meet some school needs has also produced some negative effects on morale.

The Review of Career Guidance Services in 2000 proposed that careers advisors be appointed to provide career information and career education programs, thus removing some of the secondary guidance officer's careers work. This proposal was also strongly supported in the current submissions, with a significant group specifying that career counselling should remain a part of the guidance role. The appointment of career teachers or advisors could provide a comprehensive developmental careers program to all students and reduce the demand on guidance officers for information, but might also create a greater demand for guidance officers to provide career counselling in more depth.

Other proposals for reducing aspects of the guidance workload that were well supported in the submissions included removing administrative tasks and providing clerical support. More specifically, a significant number proposed reducing the guidance role in the ascertainment process. This currently consumes over one-third of primary guidance officers' time.

There is currently a lack of guidance officers with specialist knowledge in the disability areas other than Intellectual Impairment. Several submissions commented on the need for additional specialist knowledge amongst guidance officers to ensure that guidance services had a full and balanced range of skills to support quality practice.

A consultative process that began in 1995 developed an extensive list of guidance competencies, published in 1998 as *Competency standards: School guidance and counselling in Queensland*. These competencies provide a framework for training and professional development in the guidance role. The vast majority of submissions also agreed that competencies for the guidance role should be reviewed and endorsed.

The senior guidance officer (SGO) role varies considerably according to the needs and staffing of each district, with the major task being the clinical supervision of guidance officers, behaviour management teachers and other staff. This primary focus on supervision was strongly endorsed by submissions to the Review. Also nominated as major parts of the SGO role were professional development of guidance officers and networking. From the survey, other substantial aspects of the SGO role shown to have increased are district services, and providing direct guidance services to schools.

A majority of districts and their SGOs support an increase in the supervision aspect of the role. Submissions to the Review regarding supervision also suggested that a psychology background for SGOs should be preferred, that criteria, expectations and accountabilities should be set for both parties in supervision, and that SGOs also

needed suitable supervisors. Currently, many senior guidance officers do not have a line manager who can provide them with appropriate professional supervision.

The great majority of those submissions that commented on the appropriate use of psychological practices and psychoeducational assessment were very clear that it was the SGO role and responsibility to train, monitor and supervise guidance officers in these practices.

Submissions were strongly in favour of SGOs receiving training, most particularly in supervision, but also in extended psychoeducational assessment, leadership and management, and that thorough induction to the position be provided.

6.2 Guidance officer and senior guidance officer roles: Consequences of issues and organisational risks

The data on guidance tasks and the increasing guidance workload indicates that larger proportions of guidance time are being addressed to reactive tasks to the detriment of proactive programs and counselling support to students and families. This is likely to result in a reduction of credibility in the school community, and a larger number of unaddressed personal and family issues having negative impacts on students' educational outcomes. This would conflict with the Learning Framework and Learning Environment key performance measures outlined in the *Education Queensland Strategic Plan 2000–2004*. Since guidance officers have mandatory postgraduate training (the majority with Masters level qualifications), it would seem more effective and accountable to direct their skills to tasks requiring their specialist knowledge such as counselling, psychoeducational assessment and career guidance.

The presence of other personnel who may have similar or related responsibilities (such as chaplains, community liaison officers and school nurses) also creates confusion regarding the guidance role. This frequently results in several people dealing with the same situation in different ways, students getting conflicting messages, and thus issues of concern not being dealt with appropriately or adequately. There is a need for districts and schools to clarify the guidance officer role and tasks in relation to other support staff, to take account of the respective skills and training of staff, and the needs and circumstances of the district and school community.

Giving the guidance role a more proactive focus would address some of the QSE–2010 consultation requests for more support for teachers, increased social support and home–school liaison, school programs dealing with life issues, development of better relationships between schools and communities, and provision of support and services to more of the student population. Studies of schools with more comprehensive guidance programs in the USA indicate that in such schools, students reported a more positive school climate and better relations with teachers. Schools with more comprehensive guidance programs were perceived as more relevant and a better preparation for the future, and their students reported that they had achieved better results than students from schools with less developed guidance programs. Students also reported feeling safer in, and more satisfied with, schools with comprehensive guidance programs (see 'A policy brief for administrators: strengthening school guidance programs in Missouri for the 21st century').

There are a range of concerns about the approximately 20% of guidance officers who are required to work across the P–12 range. Most do not have formal P–12 guidance training, work in more isolated settings with less experienced staff and fewer

community and agency supports, and have additional difficulties in getting adequate supervision and support. Neglecting the needs of P–12 guidance officers increases the risk to Education Queensland of litigation or complaints due to inadvertent poor practice.

To develop a quality workforce in these settings, these guidance officers require additional training in the aspects of P–12 work that were not included in their original training. The development of training modules and/or training programs in these additional skills would support a more competent and flexible guidance workforce, which could contribute to the development of P–12 schools. This would be aided by an endorsed list of guidance competencies, which could be used to identify skill deficits and training needs.

Guidance officers in Queensland are not required to have registration as psychologists, unlike their counterparts in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. This has led to questioning of the appropriateness of guidance officers using psychological practices, particularly psychoeducational testing and assessment and the diagnosis of intellectual impairment. Education Queensland faces the possibility of legal action challenging the appropriateness of guidance officer assessments and consequent decisions about ascertainment, placement, and educational programs.

These issues were addressed in 1992 in the *Report on the Use of Psychological Practices by Guidance Officers*. Though the report was accepted, its recommendations (covering maintenance of standards in guidance practices, training and qualifications, clinical and technical supervision, purchase and use of restricted tests and implementation processes) have not been fully implemented. Similarly, the *policy on psychoeducational assessment* (specifying a framework for access and use of restricted tests, training and supervision necessary for accreditation to use particular tests, and processes for managing test resources) has no official status after three years. Both these documents, if reviewed and implemented, would provide clear and rigorous guidelines for psychological practices, ensuring appropriate guidance practice and defensibility in the event of legal action.

6.3 Guidance officer and senior guidance officer roles: Resource implications

Appropriate support staff to reduce the administrative duties required of guidance officers could be provided as part of school staffing, or by an additional allocation of administrative support time to the guidance officer.

The proposal from the Review of Career Guidance Services to provide careers teachers or advisors implies additional staffing numbers to schools, and might also involve training costs.

Additional training for guidance officers working P–12 would require training modules that could be facilitated through Learning and Development Foundation and would necessitate some development costs. Alternatively, there might be current or future relevant university courses offered in distance mode that guidance officers could access with Tertiary In-service Support. (Development of a previous course in Assessment was tendered to University of Southern Queensland for \$16 000, but to participate in existing university courses could cost \$800–\$1000 for fee-paying semester units, or HECS of \$350 per unit).

Supporting nominated guidance officers with specialist knowledge in disabilities to enhance their generic skill base would require some allocation of time off line to

maintain currency of specialist knowledge, and to provide consultation and advice to schools and families.

Endorsement of the *Report on the use of psychological practices by guidance officers in Queensland 1992*, the *Competency standards: School counselling and guidance in Queensland*, and the *Draft policy on restricted psychoeducational testing* require no financial commitment other than reviewing the Report for its appropriateness to the current department structure, and the production and distribution of these documents.

6.4 Guidance officer and senior guidance officer roles: Recommendations

- a) *That with respect to the guidance officer role:*
 - i) *it include all the tasks currently allocated including counselling, assessment and ascertainment, career counselling, behaviour management, and supporting learning needs, except for career information (see Review of the provision of Career Guidance Services, 1999)*
 - ii) *that guidance officers work in primary, secondary or P-12 settings as determined by the needs of Districts and schools*
 - iii) *that a number of guidance personnel with specialist expertise in children with low incidence disabilities be designated within any new Out of School Services models and any review of Special Education Services.*

- b) *That with respect to the Position Description:*
 - i) *it be rewritten to include endorsed Competency Standards*
 - ii) *the role of the guidance officer progress towards significant proactive and early intervention work*
 - iii) *that schools should continue to be encouraged to clarify the role of guidance officers with respect to other personnel in schools with similar or related roles, so that a coordinated and appropriate service for students is provided.*

- c) *That the Report of the working party on the use of psychological practices by guidance officers in Queensland (1992) and the policy on restricted psychoeducational testing be updated, endorsed, and implemented.*

7.0 Guidance Training

7.1 Guidance training: Analysis of issues

Guidance training is currently administered as a part of the Tertiary In-service Support (TIS) program, with districts being responsible for the numbers of guidance training positions, selection of trainees, organisation of the training program, and assigning of guidance suitability ratings. There is considerable variance between districts in the numbers trained, and the type of training program provided (from work observation and study days only, to structured programs of training and practicum). A number of submissions expressed concerns about the variability of the guidance suitability ratings processes across districts, with suggestions that suitability rating panels be coordinated statewide, and/or include panel members who have guidance expertise from across districts.

Guidance trainees receive a number of TRS days for their training, based on the number of university subjects they have to complete in their postgraduate guidance qualification, and up to 10 days for induction (from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 50 days, generally over two years).

The current eligibility criteria to apply for guidance training support is employment by EQ, a teaching qualification, and being enrolled in, or having completed, a postgraduate course in guidance and counselling or equivalent. Submissions received by the Review were strongly in favour of including prerequisites of several years of successful teaching experience and completion of some postgraduate subjects in core areas such as psychology and counselling.

The current training model places a major responsibility for appropriate training with the university courses, most of which do not provide specific training in the skills and processes required by Education Queensland. A significant number of submissions advocated negotiation with the universities to provide postgraduate courses that were more aligned with the guidance role.

Submissions that commented on best practice training models were strongly in favour of practical training in schools, suggesting practicums, mentoring by guidance officers and internships. A period of full-time, off-line training was proposed by a significant number as a more effective and more attractive mode of training. Other proposals included a statewide training program, flexible training delivery using online technologies, and training hubs.

The current model was intended to provide opportunities for teachers to train and take up guidance positions in rural and remote areas. However, 35% of guidance trainees have not taken up guidance positions on completion of training in the period 1995–1999. A similar number (34.5%) have taken guidance positions or acting duties in their supporting district, and the remainder in other districts.

There are also training issues (previously mentioned) for guidance officers who are required to work in P–12 settings, and in the requirement for senior guidance officers to receive induction to the position, and to provide clinical supervision.

7.2 Guidance training: Consequences of issues and organisational risks

The lack of consistency in the ways different districts approach the three tasks of selecting guidance trainees, organising the training itself, and assigning suitability ratings, has created inequities for guidance trainees, and problems for staffing the guidance services across the state.

Firstly, with regard to the task of selecting trainees, districts have had discretion in deciding how many of their TIS positions are offered for guidance training, and by what process applicants are chosen (following statewide screening of the written applications). The lack of clear processes renders these district decisions opaque. At district level, little consideration can be taken of overall guidance staffing trends and the two-year lead time (currently) for training to be completed. This has resulted in a shortage of appropriately trained staff and the appointment of people who have not completed training or do not meet the selection criteria. This exposes Education Queensland to possible legal risk if the actions or decisions of such people are questioned.

Secondly, with regard to training, some districts treat the TRS days as study days to support the tertiary study, while others attempt to provide practical training in the requirements of the job. It is a reasonable assumption that those who receive more and better training are advantaged in getting a better suitability rating than those who receive minimal training. These training inconsistencies potentially create considerable inequities between trainees in different districts, and impede the development of a competent guidance workforce.

Thirdly, there is also a perception of variability between districts in assigning suitability ratings as districts exercise discretion in the composition of the rating panel and the processes it pursues. Some trainees may be deemed suitable in the light of receiving very little direct training because of their district's approach, whereas a person with similar skills in another district may be deemed to be unsuitable.

For guidance appointments statewide, the levels of suitability rating are supposed to be indicative of the level of supervision and support the applicant will need to provide the full range of guidance duties competently. However, the variability of training and ratings makes it difficult to assess who might be the most appropriate person for a guidance position, and to thus ensure that quality guidance services are provided. In circumstances where there is a shortage of applicants for training or positions, it is possible that inappropriate people may be accepted, to the long-term detriment of guidance services.

Greater consistency in the selection and rating processes could be achieved through specifying uniform processes at district level, and by providing some statewide coordination and moderation processes. A contract signed by the trainee agreeing to a period of guidance service and possible locations following training could be considered as a part of the initial selection process, and could then inform the content of training to meet those districts' needs. In the suitability rating process, the guidance competencies would provide the framework for more equitable and transparent rating processes.

The current statewide training model itself has a number of inadequacies, and subsequent costs. Firstly, it is constructed on the model of tertiary in-service, which presumes that academic qualifications in guidance equate to possession of appropriate work skills. However, university courses do not prepare their students for a very significant range of guidance tasks, and this is evident in many of those who seek a guidance position based on academic qualifications alone. Consultation with universities about the inclusion of content significant to guidance positions would make such courses more relevant to those seeking guidance positions, and would assist Education Queensland to select and employ better prepared guidance staff.

Secondly, the allocation of a number of TRS days over several years (on average one per fortnight) makes it difficult for guidance trainees to move from the teacher role to the guidance role during training. Thirdly, because it is based on an in-service model rather than a training model, some trainees are disadvantaged in receiving fewer training days because they were working part-time, were advisory visiting teachers, or had completed some or all of their study at their own expense. These factors often result in training which is inefficient, and less than adequate for the guidance role.

Finally, and most significantly, the current model carries no expectation that the trainee will take a guidance position upon completion of training. Given that over one third of trainees have not taken up guidance positions, there is a major financial issue that needs addressing immediately.

Many of these issues could be addressed by placing the focus of the program on training rather than tertiary in-service support. An expectation that applicants had completed a significant proportion of their postgraduate course before applying would reduce in-service costs (since current reimbursement of university costs is a significant proportion of the guidance training funds). This would also give selection panels additional information about the applicants' suitability, and enable training to begin with a cohort possessing higher levels of skill and understanding.

The focus of such a program could emphasise the development of practical skills in the real life setting of schools, ideally in a block release. Uniformly high quality training could be facilitated by centralised coordination of content, activities, support and resourcing to trainees and their SGOs. Training activities could be structured using guidance competencies, and information from these experiences would be very valuable in assigning suitability ratings.

There are also ongoing training needs for senior guidance officers that should be considered in this context, principally induction training and training in clinical supervision. The responsibility for quality assurance highlights the need for SGOs to be skilled in supervision. Currently, there is no formal induction training or process for newly appointed SGOs, nor is there any training in clinical supervision. Senior guidance officers may be appointed without having any particular knowledge or skills in clinical supervision generally, or in the psychoeducational tests they may be expected to supervise. This might expose Education Queensland to allegations of improper practice. Providing training to SGOs, particularly in clinical supervision, would be a significant step in developing common understandings and an organisational culture of quality supervision.

Training could be coordinated and facilitated through a Training Coordinator position located in the Learning and Development Foundation. This would ensure that quality training and resources were provided, particularly to those who would otherwise not have access to professional development and training.

7.3 Guidance training: Resource implications

The change to a six-month block release program for guidance training has been proposed in the review of Tertiary In-service Support in 2000. The financial details will be negotiated in the 2001–2002 budget.

The recommendation that prospective trainees be required to have completed half of their postgraduate guidance course would reduce the possible costs of reimbursement of university study by half (up to \$4000 per trainee). It is also anticipated that the change to six-month block release could reduce the program support costs.

The strategy of instituting contractual agreements with trainees about their subsequent guidance service and locations is expected to greatly reduce the rate of trainees failing to take up guidance positions, thus reducing the overall expense of training.

Any decision to increase the number of trainees will incur additional costs. However, 32% of permanent guidance officers (129 full time and part time employees) will be aged 55 or over in the next five years, and will be eligible to retire. Without an effective training program with increased numbers to fill the positions that become vacant, guidance positions will remain unfilled, or an increasing number of less than competent people will be appointed.

Clinical supervision training for senior guidance officers could be facilitated through Learning and Development Foundation using modules developed inhouse, or outsourced to an appropriate provider.

Statewide coordination of guidance training programs and activities, essential professional development for guidance officers, and induction and training of senior guidance officers would most appropriately be managed through a Training

Coordinator position located in the Learning and Development Foundation. Funding for this position would need to be commensurate with the need for the appointee to have guidance experience, training, and presentation skills.

The statewide coordination of numbers and selection of trainees, and their subsequent appointment to positions could be managed by a Principal Guidance Officer position (discussed in later sections), in collaboration with Human Resources Branch and the Learning and Development Foundation.

Specifying consistent processes for selection and rating of guidance trainees would incur no financial cost other than dissemination of information. Ensuring the moderation of rating panels could be the responsibility of a Principal Guidance Officer, or could be organised by districts making cross-district panel arrangements.

7.4 Guidance training: Recommendations

Recruitment and Selection

- a) *That identification of staffing needs and preselection for guidance training be co-ordinated on a statewide rather than district basis, with a focus on ensuring selection of applicants of high quality who are willing to take positions in districts with guidance needs.*
- b) *That at selection, trainees sign a contractual agreement to undertake guidance work in a chosen District or Districts upon completion of training as requested by the department.*
- c) *That the prerequisites for guidance training be amended to include:*
 - i) *three years experience of successful teaching practice*
 - ii) *personal suitability (as determined in interview, and through referee reports)*
 - iii) *an understanding of guidance programs.*

By 2004, the prerequisites should also include specified core subjects in counselling, behaviour management and assessment at a postgraduate level.

From 2007, specified subjects in undergraduate psychology should also be included as a prerequisite for guidance training.

Training

- d) *That the training period consist of full-time release on full pay for six months, as recommended in the Tertiary In-service Support Review of 2000, to be delivered primarily where the person is situated, and be mainly to teach to EQ needs.*
- e) *That the training be delivered through distance education modules, supported by some face-to-face programs and include supervised practicums in schools under the guidance of the local SGO and the guidance officer, and some postgraduate study for which HECS is paid.*
- f) *That senior guidance officers be inducted into the role and receive specific training in clinical supervision.*
- g) *That consideration be given to making registration as a psychologist a prerequisite for the senior guidance officer position in the future.*

- h) That a position of training coordinator be considered, with responsibility for the coordination of the six months training program, delivery of professional development, and coordination of SGO induction and training in clinical supervision.*

Post training

- i) That a working party be convened to review the accreditation of guidance courses at each of the universities, and to approach the Psychologists Board of Queensland regarding the possibility of including the prior learning of guidance officers in the process of registration as psychologists.*
- j) That guidance trainees be subject to a performance review after 12 months appointment to a guidance position.*
- k) That specific training be provided in test administration for all guidance personnel when new tests are released.*

8.0 Equitable allocation and resourcing

8.1 Equitable allocation and resourcing: Analysis of issues

The official allocative number of guidance officers has remained unchanged since 1993 at 307, although student enrolment has increased by 6.6%, and schools have greater needs for guidance officer support. The official allocation has been supplemented by approximately 70 guidance positions, (initially funded through Regions' resources), which have continued into the district structure. Some districts have reduced their guidance numbers to their official allocation, while other districts have continued with additional supplementary numbers.

Submissions to the Review on this issue almost unanimously asserted or implied that the current allocation was insufficient. Various recommendations about guidance numbers included improving the guidance officer–student ratio (1:800 being the most common proposal), having equitable allocations to primary and secondary, and taking the immediate step of including the supplementary guidance numbers in the official allocation.

A large number of submissions also addressed the allocative methodology, with very few suggesting that guidance numbers be allocated on student numbers alone. The major factors nominated to be included in the allocative methodology were school and community needs, rural issues (distance, isolation and lack of other agencies), socioeconomic data (for example, Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage [IRSED]), and cultural and disadvantaged groups. Student data such as appraisal, ascertainment and statewide diagnostic data were mentioned by comparatively few respondents.

Districts report considerable difficulties in using the transfer system to manage guidance numbers. Metropolitan districts have been largely unsuccessful in transferring guidance officers, and rural districts are reluctant to approve a guidance transfer unless there is a person to back-fill the position. Together, these factors have contributed to a virtual stalemate in transferring guidance officers between districts.

Opinion was divided amongst submissions about whether greater incentives (for example, RAIS, housing, additional professional development funding) should be

provided for country service, or whether standard Human Resource transfer practices should be applied. A significant number of submissions advocated for central coordination of guidance training, appointments and transfers, most of these suggesting that this be the responsibility of a supervisory guidance position in Central Office. There was also the proposal that country service obligations should follow guidance training and appointment.

A number of guidance positions in metropolitan districts have been filled for at least six years by teachers on Acting Duties, due to an embargo on permanent positions in the south-east corner.

There are currently shortages of appropriately trained people to fill guidance positions, not only in remoter rural districts but also in provincial centres, resulting in the employment of people who do not meet the guidance officer criteria. This is likely to be compounded by the 32% of guidance officers who will be eligible to retire in the next five years. This emphasises the need for an expanded, quality training program.

There are significant disparities in the resourcing of guidance officers, with secondary guidance officers generally well resourced and supported by their schools, while primary guidance officers and senior guidance officers are less likely to receive the same level of resourcing and support. This view was endorsed in a number of submissions, several of which commented on the disparity between guidance grants (\$1040 per allocated guidance number) and those provided to Support Teachers Learning Difficulties (\$2080). A significant number proposed that there be nominated minimum facilities, including access to a computer, email and the Internet, and appropriate resourcing clearly identified with guidelines for base schools.

The psychometric tests and test proformas used by guidance officers are provided centrally through a test grant which is distributed to districts on a pro rata basis. The statewide current grant of \$230 000 has reduced purchasing power in the light of rising test prices exacerbated by the falling Australian dollar, and the introduction of the GST, while ascertainment in an increased number of disability areas requires greater testing. Indexing the test grant to the CPI, and allocating additional funds for new tests as they supersede the current tests were proposals supported by a number of submissions.

In 1996, a Test Review Panel was formed with senior guidance officer representation from each Region to oversee the use of psychoeducational tests. The role of the Panel has been to coordinate the trialling of new tests, to approve new tests for use by guidance officers, to design and implement the training requirements for each test, and to inform the policy process regarding restricted tests. One of the outcomes of the Test Review Panel processes, as proposed in the 1992 *Report on the use of psychological practices by guidance officers* was the *Draft policy on restricted psychoeducational testing*.

8.2 Equitable allocation and resourcing: Consequences and risks

The current allocative number of guidance officers is clearly inadequate, as evidenced by schools' feedback about the need for more guidance time and the increasing guidance workload, and in spite of the supplementary guidance numbers retained from previous regional arrangements. The QSE-2010 consultations clearly expressed community concerns for an increased and more accessible guidance service.

Addressing the guidance allocation will support undertakings in the Strategic Plan for the following objectives:

- Learning
 - providing services to students with disabilities and special needs and at educational risk
 - providing pathways to postschool destinations
 - conducting early interventions with pre-Year 1 students.
- Schools
 - facilitating student access to social resources and services
 - supporting community and agency networks.
- School Workforce
 - providing professional development
 - supporting teachers.
- Portfolio relationships
 - coordinating services with other departments
 - maximising academic and social outcomes.

The current allocative situation has significant inequities on two levels. Firstly, there are districts that have reduced their guidance numbers to the official allocation, and some that have retained supplementary numbers. Secondly, there are inequities in a situation where some guidance officers are permanent and others continue to do guidance work for a number of years on Acting above level/ Higher Duties without the benefits of permanency.

In the short term, a proposal to add the supplementary numbers to the official allocation would allow an equitable reallocation to districts, the offer of permanent positions to those who have been on acting duties. It would also possibly allow the transfers of guidance officers who have done remote service and have transfer points. However, the new permanent positions might be offered in new locations, and parties such as the QTU would want to see a fair and transparent system for appointing staff to these new positions.

In the long term, the move towards a better guidance officer to student ratio would enable guidance services to more effectively meet the increasing workload, to directly support a larger proportion of students and families, and to establish more comprehensive, developmental and proactive programs across schools. This would be particularly significant in primary schools, and might reasonably be expected to develop long-term positive effects that would flow into later schooling. A commitment to longer-term increases in guidance numbers needs to be linked to training numbers to ensure there are sufficient appropriately qualified staff to cover natural attrition as well as growth.

The submissions gave evidence of the widespread perception that allocation of guidance numbers on the basis of student population alone is not reasonable. Most responses argued that allocation should be based on community needs, and this is in keeping with QSE–2010's focus on school communities. However, community need itself is difficult to quantify. Other factors advocated in the survey, such as socioeconomic data, and rurality, are more measurable, and could be factored into an allocative formula to provide a reasonable approximation of community need. Such a formula would provide a fairer method for reallocating guidance numbers to districts.

The issue of transferring guidance officers with remote service to more desirable locations has been one of QTU's prime concerns, particularly since guidance is a teaching rather than a classified position. The use of forced transfers to create vacancies in desirable locations has been almost completely unsuccessful, in that such transfers have mostly been successfully appealed. In the event of transfers being upheld, guidance officers possess a range of skills that would enable them to find other employment rather than relocate. While this creates a space to be filled by a remote transferee, it also means that Education Queensland loses a skilled guidance officer, and creates greater difficulties for the country district to back-fill the transferee. On the other hand, incentives are unlikely to attract a large number of guidance applicants. It is a dilemma that the greatest incentive would probably be the guaranteed assurance of a transfer to a location of choice following remote service.

Flexibility in guidance staffing could be improved considerably through appointment conditions being attached to guidance training, and through increasing guidance numbers.

The proposal for a central guidance position at a higher band (for example, a Principal Guidance Officer position at Band 9) is to ensure strategic oversight of guidance services, to effect efficiencies in the support of guidance services, and to provide coordination in a range of sectors. Currently, there is no coherent overview of guidance, or coordination between the fragmented aspects of policy and guidelines, guidance grants, staffing and transfers, training, selection, and developing areas of guidance work.

The Principal Guidance Officer position would have responsibilities for overseeing, supporting and enhancing the overall guidance service, providing strategic direction, coordinating the logistics of funding and staffing, facilitating quality guidance training, and providing information to sectors of the department. The position would be responsible for maintaining information relevant to guidance services, which at the time of this Review was not available, and had to be researched and collated.

Staffing is one obvious area of future risk, given the current shortage of trained people, the moratorium on guidance training positions this year (2001), and the probable retirement of a substantial proportion of guidance officers from July 2003 (when the full advantage of the recent Enterprise Bargaining Agreement takes effect on defined benefit superannuation). This indicates that additional trainees should be funded and trained in the intervening period.

The resourcing of itinerant guidance officers is an issue that has been raised in submissions to the review and should be addressed in future district structures and relationships with schools.

With regard to the grant for the central test order, Education Queensland will be under an obligation to replace the Weschler Intelligence Scales for Children Third Edition (WISC III) when it is superseded by the Fourth Edition expected in 2003. Duty of care would dictate that out-of-date tests should not be used. Currently, the WISC III is the intelligence test most widely used by guidance officers. The current test grant is not sufficient to replace the WISC III, or to purchase sufficient numbers of other new tests that may become available. Given the sensitivity of guidance officers conducting psychological testing, providing up-to-date tests and test training is imperative.

One of the roles of the Test Review Panel is to identify potential risks to the department brought about by guidance and other staff using tests which are

unreliable or not valid for Education Queensland students, or through administering and interpreting tests without having the appropriate knowledge or training. Such actions could constitute unprofessional conduct, and could lead to litigation against the department. There is already reluctance by some test suppliers to continue to supply restricted psychoeducational tests. While the Test Review Panel's recommendations have been circulated to guidance officers and senior guidance officers, they lack official status.

8.3 Equitable allocation and resourcing: Resource implications

The proposal to increase the official allocative numbers by adding the supplementary guidance numbers will incur the costs of the additional 70 salary increments over time, and increased leave provisions. It would also have implications for guidance grants if these continued to be paid a per capita amount, by increasing the total by around 20%.

The long-term proposal to increase guidance numbers to attain a guidance officer–student ratio of 1:800 would require an increase in guidance numbers to 584. This could be achieved by an incremental 10% increase over five years. This would also require additional guidance training numbers to provide the increase in appropriate applicants.

Changes to the methodology for allocating guidance officers to districts will have no financial cost. Districts receiving additional guidance officers would have to provide additional resources.

Increases to the guidance grant will be influenced by decisions about the allocative guidance number. To achieve parity with the grants for Learning Support teachers would cost slightly more than \$300 000 on current numbers.

To replace all WISC III tests when the Fourth Edition becomes available in 2003 is estimated to cost \$450 000. It may be that purchases of other new tests such as the Differential Ability Scales in the interim might reduce the number of new WISC tests needed.

Indexing guidance and test grants will incur financial costs depending upon the rate of inflation.

Giving official status to Test Review Panel recommendations will require no additional financial resources.

The proposed Principal Guidance Officer position and appropriate administrative support could be funded through the salaries of the two unfilled Band 6/ senior guidance officer positions in Central Office.

8.4 Equitable allocation and resourcing: Recommendations

- a) *That by 2010 the ratio of guidance officers to students be reduced to 1:800.*
- b) *That the ratio of senior guidance officers to guidance officers should be retained at 1:10.*
- c) *That the present base allocation of 307 guidance officers be increased to 377 by the addition of the extra 70 supplementary positions immediately. (This would be reasonably cost neutral).*

- d) *That the allocation of guidance officer numbers to Districts be based on a formula of enrolments plus IRSED and geographical distance, and be indexed to student growth.*
- e) *That the new guidance allocation be equitably redistributed to districts (using the allocative formula outlined above), and that the additional positions be made permanent.*
- f) *That the existing two unfilled Band 6, senior guidance officer positions in Central Office be incorporated into a new Band 9 Principal Guidance Officer position, to be based in Student Services. The responsibilities of the position would include coordination, leadership, advocacy, quality assurance and policy advice regarding guidance services, and supervision of SGOs.*
- g) *That the equality of need for guidance officers across primary, secondary and P-12 sectors be endorsed, and therefore any increase in guidance numbers be made to primary numbers in districts where there is inequality between primary and secondary numbers.*
- h) *That the central test grant, and the base grant and the itinerant grant to guidance officer base schools be increased and be indexed to inflation and that guidelines in relation to the grants be developed for principals of base schools.*
- i) *That minimum standards associated with guidance officer service delivery be developed and endorsed, including basic test kit, basic furniture, telephone and computer access, and that these standards be communicated.*
- j) *That the Test Review Panel be given official status to approve new tests for guidance officer use, determine training requirements for psychoeducational tests, coordinate the trialling of new tests, and develop policy with regard to the use of restricted psychoeducational tests.*
- k) *That the recommendations above be considered in relation to proposed changes arising out of the Out of School Services project.*

9.0 Results of Consultation

The following organisations have provided responses to the issues raised in this Review:

The Office of Child Protection in Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland
 Queensland Department of Health
 Queensland Secondary Principals' Association (QSPA)
 Queensland Middle Years of Schooling Coordinating Committee
 Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU)
 Australian Board of Certified Counsellors (ABCC)
 Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA)
 Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association (QGCA)
 Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations (QCPCA)

The Office of Child Protection has commented on the critical role of guidance officers in identifying students affected by social and economic problems, providing early or preventative interventions, and retaining students in education through addressing

their needs and providing support. The comments particularly noted the behavioural, emotional and learning difficulties experienced by children in care, and their need for assistance in overcoming educational barriers. To that end, the comments endorsed the need for a high proportion of guidance time to be used in counselling and support, and for development and training in identifying students at risk, and using specialised counselling skills and interventions.

Comments from the Department of Health suggested that standardisation of the guidance officer role, possibly through a focus on guidance competencies, could improve relationships between schools and health services. This would improve the identification and referral of at-risk students, and enhance collaborative early intervention strategies.

The Middle Years and QCPCA submissions emphasised concerns about at risk students, arguing that there is a need for more guidance officers to provide personal counselling and support for mental health and emotional distress issues. QCPCA also advocated for greater specialised training to meet students' and schools' needs.

The ICPA expressed similar concerns, and made specific proposals to address these in rural and remote schools, including mobile guidance officers to provide additional testing and careers programs. To increase the numbers of country guidance officers, the submission proposed more country trainees through block training with flexible delivery in rural areas, and incentives such as scholarships and professional development opportunities. The ICPA also sought more equity across districts in the numbers of tertiary in-service positions allocated to guidance training.

Both the counsellor associations, the QGCA and the ABCC, endorsed the current guidance role, and proposed more thorough and coordinated induction and training, including supervision training for senior guidance officers. The QGCA submission also advocated to ensure high standards (including personal suitability), to increase guidance numbers, to establish a guidance–student ratio, and to investigate placing guidance positions at a higher band.

The QSPA supported the current guidance roles in the primary, secondary or P–12 sectors, with each requiring appropriate training. Training should be full-time with an internship or practicum in schools, based on a statewide program. The submission argued that the EQ teacher transfer process should be applied to guidance officers. It also advocated that guidance staffing be on the basis of at least one guidance officer at each school, and a ratio of one guidance officer to 600 students.

In a detailed submission, the QTU endorsed the current guidance roles, and also sought opportunities for additional specialisation, and supervision training for senior guidance officers. There was advocacy for increasing guidance numbers towards a ratio of one to 800 students, with the inclusion of the supplementary guidance numbers in the official allocation as an immediate requirement. The submission advocated for off-line guidance training, with directed transfer upon appointment, and a probationary period. It also proposed a central higher level guidance position to provide coordination of guidance services and resources, and policy support.

In addition, the QSE–2010 Consultations repeatedly indicated that easier access to more guidance officers was a widely supported proposal. The consultation indicated that guidance officers might be expected to provide increased or additional services in:

- working with students in personal and social matters
- supporting teachers, particularly with student problems and behaviours

- providing counselling for student stress
- liaising between home and school to address issues that reduce student success
- coordinating more integrated social services and agencies accessible through schools
- ensuring greater provision of career guidance and counselling around a range of pathways
- providing more flexible services to address growing social complexity.