

Evaluation

Numeracy course for NSW Government secondary schools for Year 11 and 12 students



Background

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) developed the Stage 6 Numeracy Content Endorsed Course (Numeracy course) as an alternative mathematics offering in Stage 6, for Year 11 and 12 students.

The Numeracy course focuses on developing and consolidating core numeracy and mathematics skills through authentic and relevant learning scenarios.

In 2019, the course was piloted in 39 NSW Government secondary schools, and an additional 49 secondary schools joined the pilot course in 2020.

NSW Department of Education's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) evaluation of the first two years of the pilot consisted of a process evaluation, examining how the course was implemented; and an outcome evaluation that estimated the course's impact on mathematics course-taking in Stage 6 and achievement of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) minimum standard in numeracy.

Findings

- The Numeracy course was implemented well.
- Teachers reported high levels of engagement and satisfaction with the support provided by NESA.
- Teachers and stakeholders considered the syllabus suitable for supporting students' numeracy and mathematics needs.
- The Numeracy course increased Stage 6 mathematics participation among Year 11 students by approximately 2-5 percentage points, except for the first cohort of students in pilot 1 schools in 2019 (Year 12 students in 2020).

- Substantial increases in Stage 6 mathematics participation among students enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses (8-11 percentage points), Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students (4-8 percentage points) and students in rural and remote areas (5-9 percentage points).
- The Numeracy course also increased Stage 6 mathematics participation for students from low socio-educational backgrounds (4 percentage points), albeit only for Year 11 students starting in 2020 in both pilot courses 1 and 2.

Future evaluations will investigate the impact of the course on the HSC minimum standard.

Recommendations



- Continue with expanding the Numeracy course state-wide, could significantly benefit students whose needs have not been met by other mathematics curriculum offerings in Stage 6 mathematics.
- It is important the Numeracy course is positioned positively and appropriately, to ensure is perceived as a tool for developing functional numeracy and mathematics.

