Formative Assessment as Contextualised Practice: Insider Accounts

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Abstract

This thesis draws on a socio-cultural framework to investigate the nature and function of the formative assessment practices of Queensland teachers of Year 12 English. The thesis presents case reports that examine two teachers’ accounts of the practices they rely on in their Year 12 English classrooms to use assessment for learning. The final chapter of the thesis presents a reflection on the cases, examined against a critical review of literature and an examination of Queensland assessment policy relating to formative assessment. It provides key insights into the teachers’ formative assessment practices in a distinctive assessment setting.

Year 12 is the final year of secondary school in Queensland and is therefore a high-stakes environment. In Year 12 assessment information is gathered for certification purposes, that is, for reporting student achievement at exit from a two-year course of study and from school itself. The Queensland system is described in terms of three main characteristics: school-based, externally-moderated and standards-referenced. In Year 12, all classroom assessment is designed, carried out and reported by teachers. The reference point for student achievement is defined standards, identified in subject-specific syllabus documents. External moderation by District Panels and State Review Panels made up of experienced teachers is used as part of a system of quality assurance to ensure high comparability between judgements made by schools about their students.

While a focus in Year 12 English is on reporting student achievement on course completion, and for certification purposes, there is also an expectation that Queensland Senior School teachers will be engaged in assessment for formative assessment purposes. This expectation is made explicit in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b).
Queensland teachers practise formative assessment in three interrelated contexts, referred to in the thesis as system, school, and classroom. System assessment parameters are provided for teachers in key policy documents, which they are expected to use in designing localised assessment programs that are responsive to students in their particular school. In the school context, the ways of working within a particular school have official expression in the local school instantiation of Senior English in the form of the School Work Program and relationships with senior staff including English Department Heads. Quality assurance occurs through a process of external moderation conducted by Review Panels. Teachers have to account for both system and school requirements, and interpret these in the context of their own classroom. They are influenced by their understanding of their role in formative assessment, and their understanding of the role of their students in formative assessment. Formative assessment in Queensland is, therefore, contextualised practice and this framework of multiple, interrelated contexts is consistent with the socio-cultural theoretical framework that describes formative assessment as situated practice.

The case reports presented in this thesis examine two teachers’ accounts of their formative assessment practices in Year 12 English classrooms. The data sets included two phases of interviews and formative assessment artefacts provided by the teachers. The analyses of the interviews began with thematic coding of broader chunks of data which identified the following themes: roles of participants; relationships and interactions among participants; formative assessment practices; assessment criteria and standards; formative assessment purposes in Year 12 English; formative understandings; and other possibilities for formative assessment. From these codes sub-theme codes were identified that revealed greater detail of teachers’ formative assessment practices. The artefacts ranged from official school-produced documents to actual teacher-generated handouts provided by the teacher for their own classroom. The artefacts were analysed according to
the interview data, and the teacher’s description of each artefact’s formative assessment function and by examining each for the understandings of formative assessment made available in it.

The analysis conducted in the cases is informed by a critical review of literature in Chapter 3, which identifies key messages in the literature that have implications for this study of formative assessment in Queensland. The analysis of the Queensland policy and policy-related documents relevant to school-based, externally-moderated and standards-referenced Senior Schooling in general, and Senior English in particular, revealed a growing emphasis on formative assessment.

The case reports provide several key insights into teachers’ formative assessment practices in these multiple, interrelated contexts. The first is that in these contexts, improved summative assessment grades are taken to be the evidence of improvement from formative assessment. The second is that these teachers make no clear demarcation between formative assessment and pedagogy. A third is that teachers occupy the central role in formative assessment, as the primary source of evaluative feedback. This is evidenced through students’ continued dependence on teachers’ feedback to improve their assessment pieces completed for summative assessment purposes.

Two recommendations are presented. Both are pertinent to Queensland Year 12 English classrooms, as well as to the practice of formative assessment in other assessment systems. The first is the introduction of an extra feedback loop based on self-assessment to occur after students have received feedback from the teacher and incorporated this into their work. The second is the introduction of a classroom system of storing students’ summative assessment pieces digitally as well as in hard copy to facilitate easy student engagement with their completed assessment items for the purposes of improvement.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Joanne Mary Dargusch

____________________________________  ______________________________
Signature                                Date
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Glossary of Key Terms Specific to the Queensland System

Approval: Subject-specific School Work Programs (referred to as SWPs in this study) are submitted for approval by District Review Panels. While this was originally referred to as SWP “accreditation” under ROSBA, “approval” is the term in current usage.

Achievement levels: Student achievement is matched against the Exit Criteria and Standards (Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (QBSSSS), 2002b) and expressed as an Achievement Level. The English Senior Syllabus includes statements of the characteristics of quality evident in student work at the end of the two year course of study for five Exit Levels of Achievement: Very High Achievement, High Achievement, Sound Achievement, Limited Achievement and Very Limited Achievement.

Teachers routinely substitute the letter grades of ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’ and ‘E’ for the five Exit Levels of Achievement descriptors when generating individual task-specific assessment criteria and standards matrices or rubrics. The use of the five Exit Levels of Achievement descriptors is then reserved for final achievement level decisions made as part of the verification process.

Assessment criteria and standards: Task-specific criteria and standards against which tasks will be assessed. They are presented in rubric form, including both criteria and standards descriptions. The following definitions apply:

Criterion - A distinguishing property or characteristic of any thing, by which its quality can be judged or estimated, or by which a decision or classification may be made.

Standard - A definite level of excellence or attainment, or a definite degree of any quality viewed as a prescribed object of endeavour or as the recognised measure of what is adequate for some purpose, so established by authority, custom, or consensus. (Sadler, 1987, p. 194, drawn from The Oxford Dictionary, 1933)

Authority subjects: Subjects that contribute to information for the calculation of Overall Positions (OPs) and Field Positions (FPs), used to rank students for tertiary entrance.

Certification: The issuing of a qualification at exit from a course of study. The Queensland Certificate of Education is issued upon meeting certain requirements including successful completion of Senior Schooling courses.
**Conditions:** Summative assessment pieces are required to be produced under a range of conditions as outlined in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b). This range includes: prepared written tasks, referred to as assignments; written unseen tasks, referred to as examinations or tests; and prepared spoken/signed tasks. The conditions include differences in student familiarity with genre and subject matter; amount of prior notice of subject matter and/or genre; amount of time for task production; the length of tasks; access to material and human resources; amount of time for drafting, redrafting or rehearsing; opportunities for student documentation of, and reflection on, feedback about drafting or rehearsing.

**Context:** In this study context is taken to refer to the situational contexts in which teachers’ formative assessment practices occur. There are multiple, interrelated contexts that inform teachers’ practices. These are: the wider, jurisdiction or system context; the school context; and the classroom context. The classroom is the practice context and is closely interrelated to the school context, which provides local understandings about formative assessment practice. The school context is interrelated to the context of the system, which regulates teachers’ practices in local sites. The classroom context will be used to mean the particular classrooms of individual teachers.

**Course overview:** Schools are required to develop a detailed course overview that outlines unit titles and their focus, unit objectives (which are derived from the general objectives), learning experiences, resources, assessment tasks and conditions (QBSSSS, 2002b). This is included in each SWP. It is also referred to as the Assessment Overview.

**Criterion:** A distinguishing property or characteristic of any thing, by which its quality can be judged or estimated, or by which a decision or classification may be made (Sadler, 1987, p. 194, drawn from *The Oxford Dictionary*, 1933).

**Criteria sheets:** Rubric form of assessment criteria and standards, derived from the general objectives of the course, and Exit Levels of Achievement presented as mid-range standards associated with exit criteria in the *Senior English Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b). These rubrics are referred to by teachers as criteria sheets. In Senior English, task-specific assessment criteria and standards documents accompany task specifications, referred to as task sheets, which outline the requirements of the task and are task-specific.
Curriculum: Selected knowledge, skills and practices identified for subjects and described in syllabus documents as enacted in schools.

Discourse: The English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) provides the following definition of discourse:

Discourse refers to the cultural and social practices through which individuals and groups use language to establish their identities and membership of groups, and to become aware that they are playing socially meaningful roles. Discourses provide ways of being, thinking and acting and of using language so that individuals and groups can identify themselves or be identified in social and cultural networks. When discourses gain widespread cultural acceptance, they may come to be viewed as common sense or natural. For example, there are discourses of law and order in which language choices are made that may construct criminals as victims of circumstances or as threats to the community. There are other discourses of law and order in which police are constructed as upholders of social order or as underminers of social order through corruption. At any one time or place, a number of diverse or even competing discourses may be available to language users. (p. 47)

District and State Review Panels: Comprised of experienced teachers, District Review Panels are based on eight geographic districts in the state of Queensland, with a State Review Panel for each Senior Schooling Authority subject. District Review and State Review Panels are responsible for the approval of SWPs and moderation of school work samples. Moderation occurs at two junctures: monitoring, which occurs routinely in February of each year after approximately half of the course has been completed; and verification which occurs in October of each year. At monitoring meetings, review panels “consider the schools’ implementation of a course and standards of assessment in Authority subjects” (Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), 2005, p. 8). Student folios comprised of a range of individual students’ Year 11 assessment items, both written and recorded spoken/signed, and any accompanying drafts are submitted by schools to District Panels for consideration. The purpose of verification is to advise schools on standards of Year 12 student achievement relative to syllabus descriptors of standards. The focus of verification is “the quality of each school’s decision-making informed by comparing standards of student work with the syllabus descriptors outlined in the criteria-and-standards matrix for determining exit levels of achievement [added emphasis] (QSA, 2005, p. 8). Schools’ interim judgements of Exit Levels of Achievement based on a range of student folios to date are confirmed or challenged at the October verification meetings. For verification purposes schools submit a specified range of individual Year 12 students’
folios containing summative assessment items, both written and recorded spoken/signed, and any accompanying drafts for moderation purposes.

District Review Panel verification decisions are confirmed through a sampling process conducted by the State Review Panel in order to ensure that “standards and levels of achievement in a subject are maintained across Queensland” (QSA, 2005, p. 8). Verification functions to certify reported standards of student achievement and satisfies certification requirements for system accountability.

**Examinations:** Pen and paper written examinations, referred to as tests in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b), are designed by classroom teachers, and as such are school-based and not externally-run. They are usually undertaken in one session in the classroom, under the direction of the teacher and marked by the teacher. In Year 12 English one assessment piece must be conducted under examination conditions in response to an unseen question. While the question is unseen, the resources that support the response are not. Another piece must be conducted under examination conditions in response to a question students have seen before the examination. In Senior Schooling in Queensland there are no externally-set high-stakes examinations that are common across schools and that contribute to subject-specific grades.

**Externally-moderated:** In Queensland, social moderation by panels of teacher peers is based on standards-referenced judgement. It is used to ensure high comparability across schools. The system of panels includes both District and State Review Panels who scrutinise samples of students’ work. Moderation is carried out externally to the school.

**Feedback:** “Information provided to the performer of any action about that performance” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 53).

**Folio:** “A collection of student responses to the assessment instruments over a course of study” (QSA, 2010b, p. 7). A range of student folios is included in monitoring and verification submissions sent to District Review Panels.

**Formative assessment:** “Part of the ‘formation’ or development of a student; it is essentially concerned with providing feedback with a view to improving performance. Thus formative assessment has to take place during a course or programme [original emphasis]” (Dictionary of Education, 1996, p. 106).
In Queensland Senior Schooling formative assessment is used to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers about achievement over the course of study (QBSSSS, 2002b). Its purpose is to enable students and teachers to identify “students’ strengths and weaknesses so students may improve their achievement and better manage their own learning” (p. 21). It has a rehearsal relationship with summative assessment, with an emphasis on providing experiences with particular types of tasks and assessment techniques formatively before they are used summatively. This is a generic description common to Senior syllabus documents of the time.

**Genre:** The *English Senior Syllabus* (2002b) includes the following definition of genre:

Genres are conventionalised, staged, purposeful language interactions that occur among and are recognised by those who participate within a certain culture. They are based on shared knowledge and practices and exhibit distinguishing structures, features and patterns that relate to context, purpose and audience. Despite this, genres are not static, but are dynamic, and change in response to a range of factors, such as social context, purpose, and experimentation. Some texts are hybridised or multigeneric. (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 47)

**Holistic judgement:** Teachers are required to make an holistic judgement of student work at exit, as described in the Syllabus:

The process of arriving at a holistic judgment of a student folio is essentially a classification exercise. It entails matching the folio against the syllabus standards associated with exit criteria, to determine the level of achievement that best describes the pattern of performance in the folio as a whole. Although the total folio must demonstrate students’ achievements in all three criteria holistically, in any one task a selection will be made from aspects of each criterion to suit task demands. (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 32)

**Modes of assessment and feedback:** The *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) refers to mode as “a system of communication chosen as the way to transmit a message. The choice of language mode may be written, spoken/signed, nonverbal, visual or auditory. In combination, these systems of communication form multimodal texts” (p. 48). In this thesis, the term “spoken” will be used to refer to assessment items or feedback that is produced orally. Students are required to produce summative assessment items in both written and spoken/signed modes in Senior English.
**Persuasive texts:** A type of analytical exposition included in the list of mandatory written categories of texts to be included in the verification folios in Year 12 English (QBSSSS, 2002b).

**Policy:** In this study, policy refers to those documents produced by the Queensland Studies Authority and its predecessor, QBSSSS, which provide official understandings about assessment and/or teachers and other stakeholders. Such documents include the *English Subject Guide* (QBSSSS, 2002a), *Moderation Processes for Senior Certification* (QSA, 2005) and the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b).

**Public texts:** A type of persuasive/reflective texts suitable for a public audience included in the list of mandatory written and spoken categories of texts to be included in verification folios in Year 12 English (QBSSSS, 2002b).

**QBSSSS:** Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies. See QSA.

**QBSSSS:** Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. See QSA.

**QSA:** Queensland Studies Authority; a statutory body for the Queensland Government. It provides syllabuses, guidelines, assessment, reporting, testing, accreditation and certification services for Queensland schools (QSA, 2010b). Formerly known as Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies (QBSS) and Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (QBSSSS).

**Radford:** The Radford Committee was appointed in 1969 to review the system of public examinations for Queensland secondary school students. The key proposal of the Committee (Radford, Campbell, Howell, Plowman, Roberts, Semple, & Wood, 1970) was a shift to wholly school-based assessment with a recommendation that Senior Examinations be replaced by a Senior Certificate. This took effect in 1972.

**Register:** The *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) includes the following definition of register: “Register refers to the interplay among field, tenor and mode. Language choices in texts are affected by these register variables which influence meaning making in social situations” (p. 49).

**ROSBA:** The Scott Committee’s *Review of School-based Assessment* (ROSBA) (Scott, Berkeley, Howell, Schuntner, Walker, & Winkle, 1978) was commissioned in response to recommendations that the school-based, externally-moderated, norm-referenced system
(also known as Radford) needed major changes. The implementation of ROSBA brought about a change of assessment system to criterion-based (later to be referred to as standards-based or standards-referenced).

School-based assessment: All assessment contributing to the award of a final grade on completion or exit from a course of study is carried out in schools by teachers. Teachers are responsible for the design and implementation of assessment tasks, as well as the judgement of students’ achievement in response to these tasks.

School work programs: Subject-specific Senior Schooling School Work Programs (SWPs) are documents written in each school to provide teachers with information about how assessment and the curriculum will be carried out in each Senior Schooling subject. These documents must be approved by District Review Panels.

Sectors: There are several different education sectors in Queensland: schooling sector; higher education sector; and technical and further education sector. In Queensland secondary schooling there are three school sectors: Education Queensland (government-provided education); Queensland Catholic Education; and Independent Schools Queensland.

Senior Schooling: The Senior Schooling phase includes Years 11 and 12; the final two years of schooling in Queensland. At completion or exit from Year 12, students are typically 17 to 18 years of age. Courses of study in Senior Schooling routinely consist of four semesters of work over two years.

Site: The school provides the local context in which teachers enact formative assessment practices.

Social moderation: The process of coming to agreement about judgements through social interaction. In Queensland this process is based on standards-referenced judgement. Social moderation has been a mandatory feature of Senior Schooling in its current form since the implementation of ROSBA in 1981. It is not mandatory in the other phases of schooling, i.e. Early and Middle Years.

Standard: “A definite level of excellence or attainment, or a definite degree of any quality viewed as a prescribed object of endeavour or as the recognised measure of what
is adequate for some purpose, so established by authority, custom, or consensus” (Sadler, 1987, p. 194, drawn from The Oxford Dictionary, 1933).

**Standards-referenced**: The reference point for student achievement is defined standards, identified in subject-specific syllabus documents. Exit Criteria and Standards are designed to match the learning and expectations of the syllabus, and to provide a valid basis for judgements.

**Summative assessment**: “The kind of assessment given at the end of a course, as a final judgement” (Dictionary of Education, 1996, p. 205). In Queensland Senior Schooling summative assessment is described as having two purposes: to provide feedback to students, parents and teachers; and to provide “cumulative information on which levels of achievement are determined at exit from the course of study” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 21). Students’ achievements are matched to the standards of exit criteria published in the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b). Information for certification at the end of the course comes from summative assessment.

**Syllabus**: Policy statements intended to guide teachers with essential knowledge about what should be taught and learned in a particular subject, and set parameters for curriculum and assessment in this subject. They are intended for teacher use. Syllabuses are subject-specific, e.g., English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b), and do not mandate approaches to pedagogy.

**Syllabus implementation**: Syllabus documents are contemporary, have a limited life (typically six years), and follow a process of official trialing and evaluation. Syllabuses that have undergone major revisions are first trialed in a small number of volunteer schools. The purpose of this is to assist the Subject Advisory Committee writing the syllabus with the development of the syllabus document. The syllabus is then piloted in a larger group of volunteer schools to discover the needs of teachers in regard to the implementation of the syllabus. The trial/pilot process is evaluated by independent evaluators. Information gathered from this evaluation informs the revision of the syllabus as does developing knowledge about curriculum, discipline-specific knowledge and expected assessment requirements. The syllabus is then phased in for general implementation across all schools in Queensland over a three year period (QSA, 2010a).
System: The Queensland Senior Schooling system is school-based, externally-moderated and standards-referenced. It is one of three interrelated contexts in which Queensland teachers are required to operate. The other contexts are the school and classroom contexts.

Texts: The English Senior Syllabus (QBSSS, 2002b) includes the following definition of texts:

The selection and combination of signs and symbols from different systems of language form texts, which are the material result of purposeful human activity. Texts are coherent, meaningful forms of communication created and shaped through selections among discourses, genre, register and textual features. A text can be a novel, a film, a pop song, a speech, a poem, a cartoon, a news magazine, [and/or] a webpage. (p. 49)

Subject English develops students’ knowledge of language at work in the culture, and of how language works in particular texts.

Textual features: The English Senior Syllabus (QBSSS, 2002b) includes the following definition of textual features:

Textual features are those components of texts that are chosen to suit context according to discourse, purpose, genre and register. Textual features include: cohesion, clause and sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, paragraphing, punctuation and spelling, layout, visual and auditory features and spoken/signed and nonverbal features. (p. 49)

Unit of work: The Senior English course of study consists of a sequence of structured units of work, each with a clearly defined focus. Schools determine the length of each unit. End of unit assessment in Year 12 is understood by teachers to contribute to judgements made about achievement levels for certification purposes. It is therefore understood to have a summative purpose.
Chapter 1: Formative Assessment in Queensland Senior Schooling

This thesis examines teachers’ accounts of their formative assessment practices in Year 12 English classrooms in Queensland, Australia. Years 11 and 12 are the last two years of schooling, known as the Senior Schooling phase. On completion or exit from the two-year Senior program of study, students are typically between 17 and 18 years of age. In Queensland, teachers are responsible for the design and implementation of assessment tasks, as well as the judgement of students’ achievement in response to these tasks. Teacher judgements are expected to be based on defined, published standards.

There is an expectation that in Queensland Senior Schooling, teachers will be engaged in assessment for formative purposes associated with improving students’ levels of performance, and for summative purposes associated with certification and reporting student achievement on completion of a course of study. The system also provides opportunities for students to be actively involved in assessment for formative purposes, through the use of defined assessment criteria and standards. Students who wish to be considered for direct entry to higher education on completion of schooling are required to choose from subjects known as Authority subjects. Strong quality control assurance of content and performance standards in these courses is conducted within the system.

The Queensland system has four defining features. The first three are that assessment of Authority subjects in Senior Schooling is school-based, externally-moderated and standards-referenced. The fourth feature is that the statutory authority, the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), provides essential information about mandatory curriculum and assessment requirements to teachers through syllabus documents. The Queensland system has been identified nationally and internationally as highly innovative, promoting quality learning and valuing teacher judgement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bushell, 1999; Harlen, 2005; Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, 1990; Sadler, 1986a).

The Introduction of School-based Assessment in Senior Schooling

Since 1972, the certification of student achievement in a particular course of study in Senior Schooling, such as in the Authority subject English, has been based on school-
based assessment procedures involving external social moderation by peers.\(^1\) This system was introduced after the Radford Review (Radford, Campbell, Howell, Plowman, Roberts, Semple, & Wood, 1970) found that the curriculum offerings at Senior level, as well as the external, public Senior Examinations which had been in place from 1873 to the late 1960s, were not adequately providing for all students continuing on to Senior Schooling. Subsequently, there was a loss of public confidence in the examination-based system. The Review recommended that public examinations should be abolished and replaced by norm-referenced, school-based assessment, designed and implemented by teachers and supported by a system of external moderation of teacher judgements. Norm-referencing is taken here to mean the process of comparing students’ achievement with the performance of other students on the same task or set of tasks.

Further system changes occurred in 1981 after the *Review of School-Based Assessment*, known as ROSBA (Scott, Berkeley, Howell, Schuntner, Walker, & Winkle, 1978), recommended a change in assessment focus from norm-referencing to standards-referencing. The proposal was that the reference point for student achievement would be defined standards, identified in subject-specific syllabus documents. ROSBA also maintained and strengthened external moderation, taking a particular focus on defined standards as the point of reference for judging the quality of student work and prioritising the role of experienced teachers in moderation.

The extent to which the Queensland Senior Schooling assessment system is distinct is evident when the system is compared with international assessment systems of certification, as well as those in the other five states and two territories in Australia. All assessment that contributes to the grades awarded on completion of Senior Schooling in Queensland is designed and carried out in the school itself, by teachers. This is considered to be a routine aspect of teachers’ work. In the high-stakes assessment environment of Year 12, therefore, the assessment that leads to certification of achievement on completion or exit from the two year course of study, and from school itself, is the responsibility of classroom teachers. The term “high-stakes” is taken here to reflect the

\(^1\) For tertiary entrance purposes, students sit what is referred to as The Queensland Core Skills test (QCS). This is a large-scale general skills test used as part of statistical scaling processes to moderate standards across different Authority subjects. It contributes information for the calculation of Overall Positions (OPs) and Field Positions (FPs), used to rank students for tertiary entrance.
influence of assessment on students’ post school futures, including employment and further study.

Internationally, high-stakes final year of schooling assessment is dominated by external or public examinations. In the United Kingdom, two end-points exist for students at 16 years and 18 years. Both junctures depend predominantly on national assessments run by the education system itself for certification. In the United States, state-based systems exist, including state-wide educational standards, with curricula and assessment procedures often decided at individual school board levels. External tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) are run by testing authorities or companies to inform university entrance selection. In both the United Kingdom and the United States, teachers are not involved in the design and implementation of external examination instruments, or the judgement of student achievement on these examinations.

Beside Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory is the only other state or territory that uses fully school-based assessment. All other jurisdictions use school-based assessment in combination with external examinations (Matters, 2006a). Other differences exist in relation to moderation, whether social, as in Queensland, or statistical, ranging from Western Australia’s statistical moderation of teacher judgments made through school assessments (Matters, 2006a) to New South Wales’s use of moderation for scaling purposes, based on the performance of the particular group. In Western Australia, statistical moderation is applied to the teacher judgments made through school assessments to inform tertiary entrance examination scores (Matters, 2006a). The Queensland assessment system is a unique system where teacher judgement based on defined, published standards is paramount in determining student learning outcomes for high-stakes assessment and reporting purposes.

Assessment Definitions

Before outlining the study reported in this thesis, it is important to define assessment in education. Rowntree provided the following definition:

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2 It should be noted that there are some different key features of the Queensland and ACT assessment systems. The ACT is identified as employing a “more participatory approach without the expert review, verification, confirmation and accountability aspects of the Queensland approach” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 17). Further to this, there are no common syllabuses and no published standards in ACT Senior Schooling subjects.
… assessment in education can be thought of as occurring whenever one person, in some kind of interaction, direct or indirect, with another, is conscious of obtaining and interpreting information about the knowledge and understanding, or abilities and attitudes of that other person. (1987, p. 4)

Rowntree’s definition identifies assessment as an interactional process, with interactions acting as the vehicle for obtaining information. This broad approach provides a focus on the collection, interpretation and use of particular information, as well as the purposes to which the information is put. The notion of assessment purposes is important in this study, particularly in relation to the fundamental differences between formative assessment and summative assessment purposes established in the literature. In general usage the word formative is recognised as meaning “of or relating to formation, development or growth” (On-line Dictionary, 2011). When used in relation to assessment, it is this characteristic that is carried forward to describe the purpose of formative assessment.

Generally formative assessment and summative assessment are recognised as:

Formative assessment: … part of the ‘formation’ or development of a student; it is essentially concerned with providing feedback with a view to improving performance. Thus formative assessment has to take place during a course or programme [original emphasis]. (Dictionary of Education, 1996, p. 106)

Summative assessment: The kind of assessment given at the end of a course, as a final judgement. (p. 205)

A clear difference is established here between the purposes to which summative and formative assessment information are put. Summative assessment is identified as having a terminal or end-point focus—it occurs specifically at a point in time, usually at the end of a defined period or course of study—and is used to arrive at terminal or endpoint decisions about student achievement that may result in the award of a grade on completion, or exit from a course of study, in a particular subject. It therefore has a reporting function. As described above, formative assessment has quite a different focus. It is associated specifically with feedback for improvement and takes place during a course of study, rather than at its end.

In Queensland, the duration of Senior Schooling courses of study is routinely four semesters over two years. Formative assessment occurs during a course of study and it is an expectation of the system that teachers will provide feedback for the purposes of improving a student’s performance through their formative assessment practices. This
understanding is built into the description of teachers’ planning and assessment provided in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b), as indicated here: “Assessment then is an integral aspect of a course of study. It can be formative or summative” (p. 21). A feature of the Queensland system is the perceived complementarity of formative and summative assessment (McMeniman, 1986). This understanding is built on a key connection between defined standards and learning improvement, with teachers using the standards as they take on and negotiate roles associated with both summative and formative assessment for themselves and their students.

However, to date little empirical evidence exists as to how formative assessment and summative assessment relate in practice in this high-stakes Year 12 setting. The summative assessment processes in Queensland are foregrounded in syllabus and related policy materials in this Year focused on certification. This study addresses the question of how Senior English teachers make available formative assessment opportunities for their students as they go about the work associated with high-stakes summative assessment in the final year of secondary schooling in the Queensland context. The main research question is:

What is the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment practices in their Year 12 English classrooms?

**A Focus on Senior English**

Senior students in Queensland are able to choose from a range of English subjects, predominantly choosing between Senior English and a course named English Communication. The majority of students study Senior English. It is an Authority subject that contributes to the calculation of students’ Overall Positions (OP) which are used to rank students for entrance to universities, technical and further education institutes and other tertiary institutions (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010b). English Communication does not contribute to an OP. Other specialist subjects make up the suite of OP-eligible English subjects: English Extension (Literature) which is taken in addition to Senior English; and English as a Second Language which is available to second language users in particular schools.

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3 In 2011, a total of 34,367 students enrolled in Senior English in Year 12, while 14,533 students enrolled in English Communication (QSA, 2011).
The *English Subject Guide* (QBSSSS, 2002a) links subject English closely to the importance of the English language itself for communication within Australia’s “culturally diverse communities”, and for its “power and influence in the world context…as a major international language” (p. 1). It states that “proficiency in English for all Australians enables them to share in and contribute to current and future local, national and global communities and cultures” (p. 1). In Senior English, students learn through the study of language and texts.

Generic statements about formative assessment and summative assessment are common in Senior syllabuses produced at the same time as the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b). A clear difference between the intended enactment of formative assessment in Senior English and other Senior syllabuses is the emphasis in the former on students’ “increasing independence”. There is the official expectation that students “accept increasing responsibility for their own learning” and that teachers provide opportunities for them to “gain expertise in evaluating their own and others’ work” (p. 9). The understanding that they will become increasingly independent of the teacher over the two year course is an “organising principle” of Senior English. A comparison with other syllabuses indicates that the same strong emphasis is not foregrounded in non-English subjects. Accordingly, there is the official expectation that teachers’ formative assessment practices in Senior English classrooms, the roles in formative assessment, and their interactions with students will be influenced by this understanding.

**Orientation of the Study**

This study begins from the position that the purpose of assessment as a “teaching-learning process” (Broadfoot, 1996, p. 21) is more complex than the simple delivery and assessment of curriculum. This complexity is sharply in focus in the Queensland senior secondary education system, where the teaching-learning process and the delivery and assessment of curriculum, including the design and delivery of examinations, are both the responsibility of the teacher. The study, therefore, is focused on teachers’ accounts of the nature and function of their formative assessment practices and is centrally concerned with teachers’ understanding of their role as formative assessment practitioners in the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland system. It is useful at this juncture to indicate that the researcher has extensive experience as a Senior English teacher in Queensland. The orientation of the study was informed initially by knowledge and experience gained from inside the system.
The study is oriented around several key components: a socio-cultural framing of teacher practices, including a sustained focus on assessment as contextualised practice, outlined below; assessment policy documents that provide understandings about the use of formative assessment in Queensland for teachers (discussed in Chapter 2); the informing literature about formative assessment (discussed in Chapter 3); and teachers’ accounts of formative assessment practices, in the field (Case reports 1 and 2 are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6).

**Socio-cultural framing.** This study of teachers’ formative assessment practices uses a socio-cultural framework. In doing so, it gives emphasis to the notion that formative assessment is social, situated, context-bound and context-specific. Broadfoot’s writing (1996) on assessment forms the centrepiece of the socio-cultural framework as applied in this study. Broadfoot describes assessment as a social practice that, in education, involves interactions between groups of actors including students, teachers, parents and educational institutions. This includes those groups responsible for policy-making decisions that seek to regulate and control education systems. According to Torrance, Broadfoot conceptualises assessment as an “all-pervasive social practice” (Torrance, 1996, p. xi). Taking up this description of a broad spectrum of involvement in assessment, this study examines assessment as socially enacted through and situated in relationships that occur in the classroom, as well as externally to the classroom and the school.

Socio-cultural framing of assessment as socially accomplished and situated within particular relationships permits an opening to consider the interactions between teachers and others of influence in a workplace. School-based, externally-moderated assessment puts a heavy emphasis on the decisions that teachers take in relation to assessment, including social moderation involving teacher use of defined standards to assure consistency of teacher judgement (Maxwell, 2010). In many ways the assessment of educational performance in Queensland is the type of “social project” to which Broadfoot (2009, p.vii) referred. The relationships between teachers and others who influence their practices are therefore of interest to the study. These others can include students, parents, external moderation panels, other teachers and the QSA as the statutory authority responsible for verification of students’ results.

Teachers’ accounts of their formative assessment practices give insights into three areas of focus: the decisions about the provision of formative assessment opportunities to
Year 12 English students; the roles and interactions of teachers and students in formative
assessment; and the consideration of contextual influences on teachers’ practices. A key
assumption underpinning the socio-cultural approach is that assessment is contextualised
practice. In this study context is taken to refer to sites or settings in which teachers’
formative assessment practices occur. There are multiple, interrelated contexts that can
inform teachers’ practices. These include the wider jurisdiction or system context, and the
school site and ways of working within a particular school. The school site comprises two
elements: the institutional management context and the pedagogical context. The term
“school context” will be taken to refer to the institutional management context of the
individual school. Within the school context is the pedagogical context of the classroom
where the teacher enacts, and has autonomy for enacting formative assessment practices.
The term “classroom context” will be taken to refer to the individual teacher’s
classroom—the practice context. Though the school and classroom contexts are closely
interrelated, for analytic purposes these contexts are treated as separate in this thesis.

The system context over-arches the state of Queensland. It provides system checks
and balances for all schools as part of the quality assurance of high-stakes assessment in
Senior Schooling. These governance measures include the mechanisms for standards-
referenced moderation of teacher judgements for certification, as mentioned earlier, and
the approval, or accreditation of School Work Programs (QSA, 2010a). Subject-specific
School Work Programs (SWPs) are documents written in each school to provide teachers
with assessment and curriculum details of the site-specific instantiation of each Senior
Schooling subject. They represent the cross-over between the system and school contexts.
The moderation of judgements and approval of SWPs have long been established, and are
mandated practices both in the system and across schools.

Teachers’ formative assessment practices are context-bound in the Queensland
Senior Schooling system, in the system context, the school context, and the classroom
context. Subject-specific policy documents provide specifications that detail official
expectations of practice. Teachers’ work is the local application of these expectations. In
this way, teachers’ actions are context specific, with these related contexts determining
who is involved in the formative assessment process and what the roles of teachers and
students are in formative assessment. Teachers’ actions in these contexts are influenced
by their understanding of the nature of the relationship between summative and formative
assessment, the emphasis given to each of these assessment purposes and the uses to
which formative assessment information is put.
In this study teachers are understood to be engaged in boundary-crossing (Walker & Nocon, 2007), with their formative assessment practices operating at the interface of system and school contexts. According to Walker and Nocon (2007, p. 178) boundary-crossing requires the “ability to function competently in multiple contexts”. As demonstrated in the case reports in Chapters 5 and 6, this is a feature of the teachers’ work as formative assessment practitioners. They must attend to assessment and moderation requirements at the system context level and in the context of their school, interpreting these requirements in the context of their classroom. It also requires them to boundary-cross between meeting formative assessment purposes and summative assessment purposes realised in the classroom context. A key focus of this study, therefore, is how system and school requirements influence the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment classroom practices.

The Queensland contexts. System expectations for school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Senior Schooling are made explicit by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), formerly the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (QBSSSS).4 This body is responsible for curriculum and assessment policy statements in the form of subject-specific Senior syllabuses, covering Years 11 and 12. The syllabuses are intended to provide teachers with essential knowledge about what should be taught and learned in a particular subject, setting parameters for the curriculum and assessment including “guidance on applying centralised standards to assess students to ensure that classroom and school-level assessment aligns with systemic practices” (QSA, 2008, p. 1). It is expected that the English Senior Syllabus is a document with which teachers will come in contact.

According to the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 21) formative assessment is “used to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers about achievement over the course of study”. Its purpose is to improve student achievement and enable students to “better manage their own learning” (p. 21). It also provides information about the expected function of formative assessment in Year 12 Senior English, a year

4 The Queensland Studies Authority was formed on 1 July 2002, when the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) merged with the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (QBSSSS) and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority to form the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA). The English Senior Syllabus (2002b) was produced by the then QBSSSS prior to the merger.
during which summative assessment information is to be generated for certification and reporting at exit from the course. The centralised standards, referred to above, come in the form of Syllabus Exit Criteria and Standards that are intended as a framework for making judgements of both individual pieces and student folios of assessment items, for summative or reporting purposes.

Folios are collections of student-produced pieces of work used to contribute to an overall grade on exit, expressed as an Exit Level of Achievement. The Exit Criteria and Standards are designed to match the learning expectations of the Syllabus, and to provide a valid basis for judgements. It is understood that individual student folios will contain 7 to 8 tasks at the end of Year 12, including 4 to 5 written tasks and 2 to 3 spoken/signed tasks. This will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Teachers are expected to meet external moderation requirements for QSA Senior School subjects, as carried out through external moderation panels. As explained in Chapter 2, Queensland is a large state geographically, and moderation is managed by a system of panels at two levels: District Panels based on eight geographic districts, with one member for every two schools offering the subject (QSA, 2010a); and a State Review Panel for each Senior Schooling Authority subject. External, social moderation by peers based on standards-referenced judgement is used to ensure high comparability across schools. Both District and State Review Panels are staffed by experienced teachers who scrutinise samples of students’ work, following syllabus guidelines established by the QSA. There is “respect for teacher professionalism in judging student achievement” (Cumming & Maxwell, 2004, p. 93) in the belief that the use of assessment criteria and standards with social moderation provides a valid and reliable model for making assessment decisions.

Teachers teach and assess in Senior English according to the parameters laid out in the Senior English SWP specific to each school. They are expected to customise assessments so that they are rigorous and relevant to local community contexts. Teachers’ work includes the design of assessment tasks (assignments and examinations or tests) and accompanying statements of assessment criteria and standards. These tasks are also

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5 The term ‘folio’ as used here describes the collection of the end-of-unit assessment pieces, viewed as summative by teachers. It is not the same as ‘portfolios’ as recommended for literacy assessment and instruction (van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1992, p. 94), which include a variety of measures of literacy achievement.
designated as having formative and summative purposes and form part of schools’ enactment of system policy. A selection of these documents forms part of the SWP. As teachers practise formative assessment in their classroom contexts, situated within the school context, they are involved in relationships with teaching colleagues, the Head of the English Department, students and parents. The Head of the English Department is responsible for the oversight of SWPs and the management of quality assurance processes in the school related to external moderation requirements.

The enactment of formative assessment in Senior English is further complicated by the particular subject-specific structure that influences teaching and assessment practices. The Syllabus draws heavily on critical-cultural theory (Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Kress, 1995), including genre theory (Christie, 1985, 1993; Halliday, 1973, 1975, 1978, 1985), as reflected in the focus on notions of discourse, genre, register and textual features (see Glossary for detailed definitions). However, it is noted that this theoretical position is not made explicit in the Syllabus. The terminology used in the Syllabus is reflective of this theoretical position and is carried through to the assessment section, and, more specifically, to the stated Exit Criteria and Standards. The expectation is that such terms and related understandings are also carried through to the teacher-designed assessment criteria and standards and task specifications that are intended to form part of teachers’ formative assessment practices.

Senior English is a developmental course, so named because “expertise develops more or less continuously along a number of dimensions during the whole of the two year period” (McMeniman, 1986, p. 3). Accordingly, assessment gathered later in the course is viewed as most representative of student achievement. This has repercussions for the timing of formative assessment activities.

**Research Focus**

As noted previously, the work of Senior Schooling teachers in Queensland occurs in an approach to standards-referenced assessment that was described during its early years as “sufficiently distinct from the most fully developed existing varieties in the U.S.A. for it to require independent developmental work” (Sadler, 1986a, p. 2). However, while a series of Discussion Papers (1986-1989) produced by Queensland academics began theory-building about the system, the Assessment Unit responsible for initial development and theory-building was disbanded in the late 1980s. The consequence was that independent development work was not sustained after this time.
The implementation of ROSBA in 1981, therefore, moved ahead of theory with teachers “‘licensed’ to work through the curriculum and assessment implications of so-called criteria-based assessment, outside any existing theoretical framework for the system” (Smith, 1995, p. 15). In this way, the Queensland system of criteria-based assessment was later described as developing “not so much underpinned by theory but more so as a theory-building exercise in itself” (Matters, 2006b, p. 5). This was again identified as ongoing, with Matters and Wyatt-Smith (2008) making the point more recently that “successive governments allowed the model to evolve, a process which continues today” (p. 8).

While the Queensland system is reported in international scholarly articles as an exemplar of education assessment practice (Elwood, 2006; Gipps & Stobart, 2003; Harlen, 2005; Sebba & Maxwell, 2005; Shavelson, Black, Wiliam, & Coffey, 2004), as Matters and Wyatt-Smith (2008) indicated, this successful practice “has not been theorised as a real-world manifestation of standards-based assessment” (p. 8). Further, the relationship of formative assessment and summative assessment in Queensland Senior Schooling has not been fully theorised until this day and there has been no systematic examination of this relationship.

An examination of the use of assessment criteria and standards for formative purposes in Senior English classrooms forms part of this study. While the connection between assessment criteria and standards and learning improvement has formed a central tenet of the theoretical work produced by Sadler (1983, 1986a,b,c,d,e,f, 1989, 1998, 2005, 2007, 2009a,b,c, 2010) and is integral to the Queensland Senior Schooling assessment system, there has been no systematic, sustained study of how English teachers in Queensland enact this in their Year 12 classrooms. Indeed, Wyatt-Smith (2001) observed that little is known about how teachers “weave explicit criterial knowledge into their classroom interactions in order to inform efforts at feedback and self-monitoring” (p. 129). This observation also holds for other discipline areas. Known published studies to date are restricted to case reports. Wyatt-Smith (2001) provided observations of the use of evaluative language for formative purposes in a case report of one teacher’s Year 12 English classroom. Hay and Macdonald (2008) provided case reports based on empirical evidence of teachers’ interpretation of assessment criteria and standards as they assessed students in their Year 12 Physical Education classrooms. Larger scale published studies are largely restricted to studies into the reliability and validity of the system (Masters &
McBryde, 1994; Matters, Pitman, & O’Brien, 1998), and do not extend to formative assessment practices of teachers in this setting.

It follows, therefore, that there is limited empirical data that reflects the relationship between teachers and formative assessment and the use of criteria and standards for formative assessment purposes in Year 12 English. Further, a gap exists in the research into how self- and peer-assessment functions in a system that prioritises student independence, but which also requires students to focus on summative assessment achievement that will affect post school further study and employment options.

Research does not provide clear evidence of the relationship between summative and formative assessment purposes in high-stakes Year 12 settings in Queensland. Missing from the published research on the state’s assessment system therefore is empirical evidence of the roles and interactions of teachers, as formative assessment practitioners, and students. Further, there is limited research evidence on whether expectations about the use of criteria and standards to improve learning are met in teacher practice. This study permits scrutiny of these practices through a focus on empirical data in the form of teachers’ accounts of how they practise formative assessment in the setting of school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced, high-stakes Year 12.

**Teachers’ accounts.** This thesis presents an investigation into the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment practices, and does so through a focus on their accounts of these practices in Year 12 English in Queensland. The use of teachers’ accounts, supported by artefacts of practice, permits insight into multiple dimensions of teachers’ reported understanding of the nature and function of formative assessment, as well as its actual practice. This includes a focus on the boundaries between formative assessment and summative assessment in Year 12, a year that yields summative assessment information for high-stakes purposes. Influences on teachers’ reported formative assessment practices and the extent to which teachers interact with official formative assessment expectations and requirements can also be explored, with a focus on their use of assessment criteria and standards to enact system expectations.

The teachers’ accounts provide an opportunity to examine the influence of school and system contexts on their formative assessment practices. The roles teachers identify that they and students take in formative assessment in the classroom can be explored, as well as the importance of interactions with colleagues, teachers and students, and parents.
These teachers’ accounts are understood here to be insider accounts, providing the opportunity to scrutinise formative assessment understandings through a focus on teachers’ reported formative assessment actions. In doing so, they also allow insights into what teachers’ formative assessment practices afford for students’ learning and assessment opportunities in this final year of schooling.

**Thesis Outline by Chapter**

The discussion in this chapter has situated the study in the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment system in Queensland Senior English classrooms. It has included a brief introduction of the expected role of teachers as formative assessment practitioners, boundary-crossing in order to operate at the interface of system, school and classroom contexts, meeting both formative assessment purposes and summative assessment purposes. It has presented the research focus on teachers’ accounts, permitting scrutiny of their practices and roles and interactions.

Chapter 2 provides a brief historical overview of the system changes in Queensland that began with the adoption of school-based, externally-moderated, norm-referenced assessment in the early 1970s, extending to the implementation of standards-referencing in 1981. The analysis of policy presented in this chapter draws from policy and policy-related documents that provided understandings of formative assessment for teachers during the inception of the current system and those that guide teachers’ work in the system today. The analysis indicates that a particular stance is taken on the purposes of formative assessment in this system. In addition, formative assessment practices include the use of teacher generated and published assessment criteria and standards for the development of students’ skills in self-monitoring and self-evaluation, and with intended roles for both students and teachers in formative assessment.

The review of formative assessment literature, presented in Chapter 3, brings to light three identifiable themes: formative assessment purposes; formative assessment practices; and formative assessment roles and interactions. The investigation of these themes highlights key messages about expected teacher practice and points of contestation and agreement.

A range of opinions is presented on the demarcation between formative assessment purposes and summative assessment purposes in research that reports on teacher practice, and in research of a conceptual nature. The notion of demarcation is of significance in this study, for, as stated, Queensland Senior Schooling provides
expectations of teacher practice in meeting both formative purposes and summative purposes. While formative assessment for improvement purposes is a strongly held association, there are competing viewpoints as to the extent to which improvement is synonymous with achievement gains. What constitutes evidence of improvement, therefore, is not clearly agreed upon.

The relationship between formative and summative assessment, specifically as it involves the use of standards for formative purposes, is also a contested area of the literature, with no consensus reached in the published research literature on the definition of standards, and the use of standards for formative assessment purposes. This lack of consensus has implications for the discussion of the roles of teachers and students in formative assessment, which is also divided in relation to the use of defined standards for student self-improvement and self-monitoring. This is of particular significance to this study of the Queensland system, where defined criteria and standards have a role to play in both formative and summative assessment. The key messages drawn from the field of published research, and briefly outlined here, are examined in full in Chapter 3. The key messages are synthesised with Queensland-specific research, and main understandings drawn from the analysis of system policy presented in Chapter 2 to create a warrant for this study.

The methodology of the study and an outline of the analytic approach are presented in Chapter 4. This is a qualitative, multiple case study that analyses interviews with two teachers and the documents they use for formative assessment purposes in their classrooms, referred to here as artefacts. The interviews and documents provided a point of focused analysis both of the teachers’ stated understandings of formative assessment purposes, and their related practices, including interactions with students, other teaching staff and parents. Case study was employed as a methodological approach to allow reflective analysis of professional practice (Shulman, 1996). In keeping with Jones and Vesilind’s finding (1995, p. 314) that “more recent research in teacher education has begun to focus less on observable teacher … behaviour and more on teachers’ thinking and thought processes”, a choice was made to emphasise the ways in which teachers talk about their practices through an examination of their accounts. These accounts reveal their understandings of the nature and function of formative assessment as revealed through their accounts of practice.

The two case reports are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Case study 1 is reported in Chapter 5, and Case study 2 is reported in Chapter 6. The case reports present empirical
data including interview data and assessment artefacts. The critical analysis of this data probes teachers’ understandings of formative assessment and the relationship of formative assessment and summative assessment in the final year of Senior Schooling as understood in system and school contexts. It also investigates teachers’ formative assessment practices including the provision of feedback in the classroom context. The case reports highlight the social and situated nature of the teachers’ formative assessment practices, organised around issues raised in the literature. Each case report presents several key findings about the respective teacher’s formative assessment practices.

Chapter 7 presents reflections on the case reports from Chapters 5 and 6. The reflections are structured according to the organising headings of the case reports. The reflections synthesise key findings from the case reports together with the key messages from the literature presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 8 is organised into three sections. The first section draws from the reflections on the case reports to provide three key insights into teachers’ formative assessment practices in their Year 12 classrooms in Queensland. The second section revisits the socio-cultural framing of the study. The third section presents implications of the research for practice and policy, and provides a set of three main recommendations.
Chapter 2: Policy Documents and Formative Assessment Understandings

This chapter provides a structured analysis of the official policy of the Queensland system and relevant documents. It presents and discusses key understandings about formative assessment in the Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment system. Ball refers to policy documents as “statements about practice” (1990, p. 22). The relationship between policy and teacher practice is of interest in this study of teachers’ formative assessment practices. The study is not concerned with measuring policy take-up or implementation, but with those understandings that are made available to teachers and which underpin their classroom practice. According to Hargreaves (1997, p. x), teachers do not deliver, they “develop, define and interpret”. This has resonance for teachers of Senior Schooling Authority subjects in Queensland. As already indicated in Chapter 1, system policy is expected to be interpreted and applied in the local school context, providing guidance to teachers about how assessment and related curriculum implementation are to occur in classroom contexts. This chapter explores the policy understandings made available through documents distributed in hard copy form to schools by the QSA, many of which are, in more recent years, also available electronically on the Authority website. This exploration is conducted so that observations can be made about teachers’ interpretation of policy and what this means for formative assessment practices in their classrooms. It provides an analysis of understandings of formative assessment made available in the system context.

The first part of this chapter is an historic overview of the policy changes and related changes in understandings about formative assessment in Queensland that have developed over time, to their contemporary form. Policy documents are not produced in isolation, but evolve as a result of changes that occur over time, in response to events in a particular assessment setting. Central understandings about formative assessment and the roles and relationships of students and teachers drawn from documents at key stages in the approximately 35 years since the significant system changes noted in Chapter 1 are presented. An examination of the policy background is necessary in order to ascertain how and in what form current policy is situated and to present the official account of formative assessment practice. The second part of this chapter examines the formative assessment understandings made available through the key policy document, the English
Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) current at the time the data was gathered. Four main understandings about formative assessment are identified.

Policy Changes

The history of Queensland’s system of assessment is characterised by a long period of stability in an established system, followed by rapid and radical change within a comparatively short period of time. Definitive periods are identifiable in this history: External examinations, Radford, and ROSBA. Examination of each of these periods reveals the emergence of an increasing emphasis on formative assessment presented in a range of policy documents. The following section briefly outlines the significance of each of these periods, including the roles and relationships of teacher and students and formative assessment purposes as revealed through the key documents of the time.

External examinations. In Queensland secondary schools between 1873 and the late 1960s, formal assessment comprised two external examination junctures: one at the end of Year 10 (Junior Certificate) and a second at the end of Year 12 (Senior Certificate). In addition, an external Scholarship examination originally intended to provide secondary education for a limited number of academically gifted students was widened to include the majority of students who completed Year 8.

Success in the Senior years of schooling was constituted by matriculation from Year 12, with requirements met solely through external “Senior” examinations. The curriculum associated with these examinations was essentially controlled by university set examinations and syllabuses. Initially The University of Sydney set examinations, with The University of Queensland taking over this task from 1912. Ultimately the Senior Examinations functioned as a sorting mechanism, used to determine whether students would gain entry to higher education pathways, or the workforce (Wyatt-Smith & Matters, 2007). Their purpose, therefore, was associated with both prediction and selection (Radford et al., 1970).

Roles of teachers and students in external examinations. External examinations were the focus of teaching efforts, as teachers prepared students for the content that would be assessed in the examinations and developed examination-taking skills. The emphasis, therefore, was on rehearsal, with the provision of evidence of mastery of work one of the stated purposes of the examinations. As observed by Wyatt-Smith and Matters (2007), achievement of this goal was seen to have a further purpose in itself: encouraging
and stimulating students in their work and providing them with “strong incentives for learning” (p. 58). Framed by the syllabuses provided by the examining authority, the role of the teacher was to prepare students for the examinations. This dictated planning and provided “an incentive to him (sic) to organise study for his students” (Radford, 1970, p. 55). This infers that the organisational work of education was set from outside of the school system by an external authority and in doing so, it reflects an attitude towards teaching professionalism at that time. The organisation of curriculum and assessment was not to be left to teachers themselves.

There was an assumption that teachers would interact with individual students as they progressed towards the examinations. According to the Radford Review (1970), one of the benefits of the examinations was that the needs of the small percentage of students who completed Year 12 and sat the examinations were met. Teachers and students worked together, “pitting themselves against the demands of the examinations” (Wyatt-Smith & Matters, 2007, p. 58). Relationships between teachers and students were defined by this distance from the external “other”.

Teachers used past examination papers to provide an opportunity to expose students to the examiner’s expectations and to develop strategies for decreasing the gap between their own level of achievement and the one aspired to (Findlay, 1987a). Such papers were used to train students to answer questions in the (examination) appropriate way and to help teachers identify the content for study. Butler (1995) reports that Science teachers also anticipated the questions on the external examination by finding out all they could about the Chief Examiner. The close work of teachers and students in preparing students for the examinations was seen to be a positive of this system, but the strong teacher/student relationships were to be tested in subsequent system changes.

**From external examinations to school-based assessment under Radford.** As school retention rates rose in the 1960s, increasing numbers of students sat for Senior Examination papers in a minimum of 5 subjects (most commonly 6 subjects), without intending to go on to university study. The Basset Report (1968) concluded that Senior Examinations did not provide for the needs of post-Junior, less-academic students. Butler (1995) describes the public as being dissatisfied with the breadth of the curriculum offerings, as well as with the external examination process itself.

In 1966 and 1967, this dissatisfaction turned into a loss of confidence in the Senior Examinations when 68 per cent of students failed to pass the Physics Senior Examination.
In response, a committee headed by W.C. Radford was appointed in 1969 by the then Minister for Education and Cultural Activities, the Honourable Alan Fletcher, to review the system of public examinations for Queensland secondary school students. The committee’s brief included the need to make recommendations for the assessment of students’ achievements (Radford, 1970).

The Radford Review expressed concerns about the Senior Examinations’ main function in selecting students for university courses. These included the identification of the stresses on students and teachers as a result of reported intense competition between students engendered by high-stakes external examinations and the constraints on teachers of syllabus requirements and examination preparation (Radford, 1970). It also indicated that the attainment of a good examination result came at the expense of other educational goals linked to a broad education and preparation for living (Clarke, 1987). The key proposal of the Radford Committee was a shift to wholly school-based assessment with a key recommendation that Senior Examinations be replaced by a Senior Certificate, awarded “on the basis of school assessment” (Radford, 1970, p. 3).

**School-based assessment—Radford—1971-1979.** The transition from external examinations to school-based assessment included changing roles for teachers and students, as well as changes in theoretical direction and teacher assessment practices. What became known as the Radford system was characterised by several significant differences from the external examinations system. Specifically, it:

- was norm-referenced, school-based assessment;
- assigned authority of assessment to teachers, schools and review panels;
- assigned authority to teachers to develop curriculum implementation plans;
- marked a shift in emphasis from external, “one-shot” examinations to on-going assessment that was to occur throughout a course of study.

The change to norm-referencing was particularly important to the way Radford was received. Also referred to as relativist ratings, norm-referencing required teachers to measure students’ achievements relative to the work of other students. The distribution of marks was pre-specified and determined by the Governing Board of the new statutory authority, the Board of Secondary School Studies (later to become the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies). The marks were initially set to previous Year 12 result distributions for a school.
For the first time in Queensland education history, teachers not only determined what the curriculum would look like, but took on roles associated with the construction and use of assessment instruments. Syllabuses were drawn up by Subject Advisory Committees, and subsequently approved by the Governing Board. Syllabuses were not to prescribe the detail of the subject, but to present a broad framework. The Radford Committee (1970) anticipated that schools would have freedom “to choose the detailed content, freedom in method of presentation of an approved syllabus, and, within the moderation system, freedom in methods of assessment of student performance” (p. 90). The school’s role would be to “fill out a syllabus” (p. 4).

A key recommendation of the Radford Committee was that an external Moderation Committee would be responsible for maintaining the comparability of grades in this norm-referenced system. Membership of the Moderation Committee was to be broad, including inspectors of schools, selected secondary teachers and staff members of tertiary institutions (Radford, 1970).

Radford and formative assessment. The focus of the Radford Review (Radford, 1970) was on the assessment of students’ achievements and related certification functions. The term “formative assessment” does not appear in the Review document. However, the Committee anticipated that evaluations conducted over a period of time would give the teacher knowledge of the student’s strengths and weaknesses. These evaluations, taken to mean formal assessments used for summative purposes, were therefore to be important to the teacher as an integral part of teaching. It was also anticipated that they would be important to the student, who would “welcome the evaluations because he will understand that they help him to master his work” (p. 61).

The Review itself did not extend to detailed advice about the relationship between continuous, ongoing, school-based assessment and formative assessment purposes, but the changes mentioned above gave weight to assessment in the service of improving student learning. Indeed, a Department of Education Research Branch study (McBryde & Lamont, 1978) into school-based assessment concluded that between 1974 and 1978 there was considerable improvement in the use of formative assessment. More explicit attention was given to formative assessment in changes to classroom assessment in the period following Radford.

Concerns had been expressed through submissions to the Radford Committee that the relationship between teachers and students would be negatively impacted under
continuous, norm-referenced school-based assessment. These concerns were rejected by the Committee (Radford, 1970), but the need to address what were reported to be negative effects of assessment on the relationships between teachers and students became a key issue in subsequent reports.

**Radford to ROSBA.** In response to “rumblings of public and professional discontent with the operation of the Radford Committee recommendations in the initial years” (Scott et al., 1978, p. 3), a project was commissioned in 1975 by the Australian Advisory Committee on Research in Education (Campbell, Bassett, Campbell, Cotterell, Evans, & Grassie, 1975). This wide-ranging project examined the consequences of the replacement of public examinations with moderated teacher assessments, including as part of its data-gathering questionnaires completed by teachers.

Among other concerns, the project findings were critical of the emphasis on relativist, norm-referenced ratings under Radford, linking this to the perceived erosion of teacher and student relationships and increased competition among students as a result of the norm-referenced awarding of grades. Teachers were regarded as no longer aligned with students as they worked together in the interests of students to pass examinations prepared by an external other. A second report commissioned by the Board of Secondary School Studies (QBSSS) and produced by Fairbairn, McBryde, and Rigby (1976), *Schools Under Radford*, joined in similar criticisms of the system. Both reports asserted that the expectations of Radford had not been fully met. Their research showed that teachers were giving low priority to the use of assessment as feedback to inform teaching and learning and to identify students’ weaknesses. There was a reported increase in the use of tests and examinations, with “ratings of assignments and projects rarely the basis of assessment” (Campbell et al., 1975, p. 246). Formal evaluation occurred often, with teachers reporting low to moderate use of immediate and informal evaluation under Radford, despite the stated intention that this was a provision of the new assessment system in the era following the abolition of external examinations.

The Scott Committee’s *Review of School-based Assessment* (ROSBA) (Scott et al., 1978) was commissioned in response to these two reports to advise the QBSSS on implications for its curriculum and assessment policy as well as for teacher practice (Bell, 1999). While the changes ushered in as a result of the Scott Report (Scott et al., 1978, p.3) were described as being in keeping with the “spirit of the Radford Report”, they were part of an identified need for major changes in implementation of the State’s school-based
externally-moderated assessment system. One of the key observations for formative practices offered by ROSBA, as the assessment system became known, was that under Radford: “…it would appear that as a result of current assessment practices there may be very little time for student learning per se and for diagnostic feedback [original emphasis]” (p. 27). Teachers appeared to lack understanding of the purposes of assessment, contributing to this problem.

School-based assessment: ROSBA. ROSBA’s major recommendation was the change of assessment focus from norm-based to criterion-referenced, a transformation that occurred in 1981. Instead of comparing the achievement of students against each other, criterion-referenced assessment would contrast the student’s “actual performance with the performance objectives specified in the teacher’s work program rather than the performance of his/her peers” (Scott et al., 1978, p. 36). Criterion-referencing was officially to be a wholly qualitative system, with achievement expressed against achievement levels and not in terms of numeric scores.

The key to this system was establishing defined criteria and standards. Sadler (1987) developed the following definitions of criteria and standards:

Criterion - A distinguishing property or characteristic of any thing, by which its quality can be judged or estimated, or by which a decision or classification may be made.

Standard - A definite level of excellence or attainment, or a definite degree of any quality viewed as a prescribed object of endeavour or as the recognised measure of what is adequate for some purpose, so established by authority, custom, or consensus. (p. 194, drawn from The Oxford Dictionary, 1933)

The difference between a criterion and a standard lies with what each defines about a particular area to be assessed. In education these relate to areas of knowledge, skills and performance. A criterion is a feature against which quality of performance can be assessed. While criteria provide information about what is of value, standards provide the expected features or characteristics at different levels of performance. The assessment criteria and standards were to be formatted in a tabular form that sets out the criteria as knowledge, skills and performance identified by the teacher as needing to be demonstrated in an assessment piece, with descriptions of the characteristics of that particular criterion at a range of levels or standards. In Queensland assessment criteria and standards later came to be task specific. While early discussions of the system
employed the term “criterion-referenced” to describe the assessment focus, much later “standards-referenced” gained prominence in discussions of the system.

Another significant recommendation of ROSBA was the alteration of the moderation system. Radford brought about an increased role for teachers under school-based assessment. ROSBA extended on this by changing from a system of moderation that included non-teaching members, to a Review Panel system involving experienced teachers for both the approval of subject programs and the certification of reported standards of student achievement. As indicated in Chapter 1, these two functions involve a network of District Review Panels across the state and a State Review Panel for each Senior Schooling Authority-approved subject. Issues of disagreement at District Review Panel level are resolved by the State Review Panel.

Review Panels have a key role in quality assurance in this system that is based on trust in the “professional judgments of teachers about the quality of student work” (QSA, 2010a, p. ii). The work of the Review Panels includes considering, providing feedback and approving subject-specific SWPs. This is also referred to as SWP accreditation. It also includes monitoring and maintaining standards within Districts and across the state. The latter function occurs at two junctures: moderation of completed Year 11 work to confirm interim levels of achievement; and verification of Exit Levels of Achievement towards the end of Year 12. A high level of comparability is reported to be attained through these functions (Marion, Peck, & Raymond, 2011; Masters & McBryde, 1994; QSA, 2005). Verification functions to satisfy certification requirements for system accountability. Readers interested in more detail about accreditation and certification requirements are advised to see Maxwell (2004) and QSA (2005).

**Formative assessment and the roles of teachers and students under ROSBA.**

With the shift from Radford to ROSBA, understandings of formative assessment began to develop. This does not mean that the term itself was employed frequently, but analysis conducted of the ROSBA document indicates that there is an emphasis on formative assessment functions, underpinned by the idea that assessment strategies should serve several educational purposes. These purposes are wide-ranging:

a. to enable the student to assess his/her learning and to provide information which can be used to correct deficiencies in his/her learning;

6 There are other authority-registered subjects that do not contribute to tertiary entrance scores and have different moderation procedures.
b. to enable the teachers and students to modify teaching/learning programs to suit the needs of the students;
c. ultimately to provide the student and parents with information concerning the student’s achievement and potential;
d. to assist students and parents in determining future education and employment pathways;
e. to provide, for other educational institutions and employers, an indication of the suitability and readiness of the student to undertake further education and/or employment. (Scott et al., 1978, p. 36)

Scott et al. (1978) maintained that the norm-based assessment system of Radford had limitations for a, b, c, and d above, inferring that the work under Radford did not extend completely to the range of purposes beyond certification (e). Purposes a, b and c, in particular, have implications for involvement of both teachers and students in assessment associated with learning. Priority is given above to the use of assessment information to suit student needs, with an emphasis on feedback associated with achievement and potential. Notably, Scott et al. gave emphasis to “diagnosis with remedial feedback, where the results obtained do not contribute to end of semester competency classification. The emphasis should be considered in the accreditation of school programs in each Board subject” (p. 46). This strongly identified the need for assessment for learning improvement to be formalised. Two decades later, Dudley and Luxton (2008) described the above statement about assessment made in the ROSBA report as a declaration that “in an environment of high-stakes certification, the prime purposes of assessment are those of improving teaching and learning” (p. 2). The specific focus on these purposes became influential in the roles of teachers and students under ROSBA. While the role of teachers as assessors was expected to alter, so too was the role of students. Essentially, students were expected to have a more explicit, active role in their own learning. Of interest in this chapter is the extent to which the understandings discussed here have been carried forward to subsequent official statements about the system and become part of required assessment practice.

Criteria and standards and formative assessment in ROSBA. The Queensland system was to feature criteria and standards as the basis for judgements to be made on student achievement. Matched against general objectives, criteria and standards were to be used to determine students’ level of competence (Dudley & Luxton, 2008). A five-category scale of achievement levels was to be applied to determine the standard of student’s performance: Very High Achievement, High Achievement, Sound Achievement, Limited Achievement and Very Limited Achievement. Achievement level
statements provided concise descriptions of “what a student has to be able to do at the end of a course in order to be awarded a particular achievement level” (Sadler, 1986c, p. 1).

The ROSBA document made no explicit connection between student self-evaluation, the modification of teaching/learning programs and the use of criteria and standards for these purposes. This does not mean that the criteria-based assessment procedures and the purposes of assessment itself were unrelated, for both were central to how assessment was to be carried out in school-based assessment and were explored further in a series of Discussion Papers. In these Papers the understanding of the use of criteria and standards under ROSBA developed beyond their employment by teachers to measure achievement and indicate standards of performance competence, and further towards their use by teachers and students for formative purposes.

**Theory-building: Radford and ROSBA.** The changes that occurred under the Radford and ROSBA systems have been reported as both remarkable and radical (Bell, 1999). There was no existing, established precedent for either system of secondary school assessment, reporting and certification. The change to moderated school-based assessment under Radford was not situated in any existing theoretical framework to drive the design of the work, or research base to act as a reference point. Prior to ROSBA, Campbell et al. (1975) noted that other education systems around the world including Canada, New Zealand and some states of the United States had abolished external examinations at the stage at which Queensland moved to school-based assessment, but in none of these cases had moderated teacher assessments been adopted as an alternative.

The move to moderated, school-based, criterion-referenced assessment under ROSBA was also unsupported by empirical evidence of such a system working (Matters, 2006b). As indicated earlier, Sadler (1986a) noted that while the ROSBA philosophy was within the criterion-referencing tradition, its distinctiveness meant that independent developmental work was required. Wyatt-Smith and Matters (2007, p. 9) later remarked, “the architects of the system had to draw on the limited literature and experience elsewhere, and then create their own operating system”. The theory that supported the system was built, therefore, as the assessment system developed (Matters, 2006b).

**The Discussion Papers**

Developmental, theory-building work began with Discussion Papers produced between 1986 and 1989 by the Assessment Unit of the BSSS, financed by Government
funding (Matters & Wyatt-Smith, 2008). This four-person group was established in 1985 after claims that the Board had been too concerned with the mechanisms of implementation and action and not the necessary “high level and continuous reconceptualisation of what standards-based assessment means in practice” (Archer et al., 1983, p. 37). The Assessment Unit was disbanded in the late 1980s. Since then, no ongoing, sustained conceptual development of the school-based, standards-referenced system has occurred (Smith, 1995).

The Discussion Papers therefore represent all of the theory-building work that was accomplished and available at the time around this new conceptualisation of assessment in Queensland. Matters (2006b) described them as introducing understandings about formative and summative assessment that are still central to the way assessment is discussed today in Queensland syllabus documents. There is some ambiguity about the status of these documents, which were referred to by Butler (1995) as conceptualisations of the criteria-based assessment scheme. They were not named as policy documents, but it was noted later that they guided “the revision of syllabuses under ROSBA and provided theoretical and operational frameworks for the implementation of the recommendations of the ROSBA Report” (Dudley & Luxton, 2008, pp. 2-3).

Analysis of the Discussion Papers reveals two key themes as underpinning the Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment system: that formative and summative assessment purposes are distinct, but complementary, with an emphasis on formative assessment for student improvement; and that roles have changed for both teachers and students through the use of assessment criteria and standards. The discussion that follows explores these themes.

**Formative assessment and summative assessment purposes.** McMeniman’s discussion paper (1986) is significant as the first writing examining how formative assessment and summative assessment were to be used in school-based assessment in Queensland. She described the purposes of formative and summative assessment as distinct and complementary. McMeniman defined formative and summative, as follows:

- **Formative assessment** occurs when assessment, whether formal (eg. testing) or informal (eg. classroom questioning), is (a) primarily intended for, and (b) instrumental in, helping a student attain a higher level of performance.

- **Summative assessment** is designed to indicate the achievement status or level of a student. It is geared towards reporting at the end of a course of study, especially for purposes of certification. (McMeniman, 1986, p. 2)
Formative assessment as described here is distinctive in four ways. First, it includes both formal or informal assessment. Second, formal or informal assessment can be used to support students to achieve a higher level of performance. Third, formative assessment occurs when there is an intention to help a student improve and assessment is instrumental in making this happen. A fourth observation could be made that there are roles for both teachers and students in formative assessment. The word “help” has connotations of an action performed between teachers and students working towards a shared goal. The teacher has a clear role as a formative assessor who enables students’ improvement through the provision of planned formative opportunities at different points of opportunity and need.

While formative assessment and summative assessment are clearly distinctive, this does not mean that they are disconnected purposes. McMeniman (1986) further explored how “formative and summative assessments are not mutually exclusive but complementary approaches to a reliable indication of student achievement [original emphasis]” (p. 4). This reflects the rising emphasis at the time on assessment associated with learning and a move away from an identified emphasis under Radford on summative assessment (Scott et al., 1978). Teachers were to allow assessment for semesters 1, 2 and 3 (Year 11 semesters and the first semester of Year 12) to contribute towards the end-of-course or exit statement: that is, they had a potential summative purpose. As previously discussed, weight was also given to formative assessment used for diagnosis and remedial feedback.

McMeniman (1986) proposed that progressive assessment would occur across Years 11 and 12, with the teacher continually updating information through many student performances, across a variety of tasks, and over this considerable period of time. It was anticipated that teachers could use examples of work over a number of semesters to plot a student’s development in a discipline. These examples of work would “give a stability or robustness to teacher judgments” (p. 4). Accordingly, all information about student performances gathered across the two year course was to be formative until a decision was taken that they served a summative or reporting purpose.

The implication was that summative assessment in a developmental course such as English depended on “the fullest and latest” information about the performance of a student and this was “most appropriate and valid” towards the end of the course at the end point of development (Findlay, 1987b; McMeniman, 1986; Sadler, 1986e). In this way, significant course aspects were to be constantly revisited and developed, with data made
redundant as more recent data absorbs or supersedes earlier data. Exit Levels of Achievement were to be based on relevant data obtained mostly during the final semester (Sadler, 1986d) as this was expected to constitute the latest and most trustworthy data on student achievement. Evidence from formative assessment pieces that were used to improve a student’s achievement, therefore, could be used for dual purposes. One of these purposes was to inform the Exit Level of Achievement awarded to the student on exit from the course. At no time do the Discussion Papers suggest that formative assessment occurs exclusively in Year 11 and summative assessment in Year 12.

Further advice was given in the Discussion Papers that teachers should have freedom to design and implement their own data-collection programs, with schools “free to decide on the balance between formative and summative assessment” (Sadler, 1986e, p. 2). No guidance was offered as to what that balance should, or could be. The decision revolved around a question of which type of assessment information schools considered most appropriate and valid at particular times during a secondary education course (McMeniman, 1986). Schools and teachers were to be autonomous in making decisions about how formative and summative assessments fitted together and in what proportions within a unit of work and across units of work. This pre-supposes that decisions about formative assessment were to be made by schools and teachers, and not at system level.

The changing roles of teachers and students: criteria and standards. A second theme of the Discussion Papers was that the changes in the assessment framework were expected to bring about a re-alignment of student/teacher relationships through a re-alignment of roles. The connected and defined criteria and standards were presented as a framework intended to be a tool for teachers and students. Sadler (1986b) anticipated that use of assessment criteria and standards for judgement purposes would be associated with changes in behaviour of both teachers and students. He argued that the defined standards would “take on an existence of their own, independent of both students and teachers. Both parties can therefore look at them together, and co-operate in trying to achieve them.

7 The Senior English course of study consists of a sequence of structured units of work, each with a clearly defined focus. Schools determine the length of each unit. End of unit assessment in Year 12 is understood by teachers to contribute to judgements made about achievement levels for certification purposes. It is therefore understood to have a summative purpose.
The move away from norm-referencing under Radford, with its emphasis on allocating achievement standards based on predetermined proportions therefore meant that “one might expect an improvement in teacher-student relations” (p. 2).

The Discussion Papers highlighted the use of assessment criteria and standards for two reasons associated with roles of teachers and students: for teacher feedback for improvement; and to develop student self-evaluative skills. Findlay (1987a) identified teacher feedback as the “principal mechanism through which assessment for formative purposes is realised” (p. 2) and claimed that for feedback to be most useful it must reference the specified criteria. Findlay qualified this further when she determined that “the sole use of ‘criteria-free’ feedback lacks specific dimensions to which a student can refer, to assess learning” and “does not attempt to direct a student’s efforts towards improvement” (p. 2). Clear feedback, therefore, would be criteria-related, with information about “remedial action as well as diagnosis” (p. 3).

Sadler (1986d) explored the possibility of reducing students’ dependence on the teacher as the primary source of evaluative feedback through the use of assessment criteria and standards. This is discussed in detail in the review of literature, but it is sufficient to say here that Sadler expanded on the roles of teachers and students by suggesting that teachers would use formative assessment information to clarify and revise work, while students would use it to study weaker areas (Sadler, 1986d). The use of standards as reference goals meant that students could learn to close the gap between where their performance was and where they wanted to be.

Findlay (1987a) expanded on this with her association between teachers’ desire to “improve student learning and subsequent achievement” (p. 1), and formative use of the assessment criteria and standards. In order to do this, teachers would provide students with the assessment instrument and assessment criteria and standards before the performance of a task. In addition, students should have exemplars of different standards illustrating various ways of satisfying the requirements of defined standards and exemplars of various tasks at a particular level of achievement to gain understanding of standards and fully develop a notion of expectations of quality.

**The significance of the Discussion Papers.** The Discussion Papers provided broad guidelines to schools about assessment practices such as teacher writing of criteria sheets, level of autonomy in assessment decision-making including the balance between
formative and summative assessment and related purposes, and where and when they should be met in a course of study. They did not emphasise formative assessment solely in the rehearsal of assessment for summative purposes. Nor did they provide detailed advice for teachers’ formative assessment practices in classrooms. Whether teachers read and were influenced by the papers is unclear (Matters & Wyatt-Smith, 2008). Given that they represented the theory-building that underpinned school-based assessment, the extent to which their understandings are taken up in the key English policy document, the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) is of interest to this study.

The Syllabus

In Queensland a syllabus is a document expected to inform curriculum, content and assessment requirements in a particular subject. Syllabuses are not concerned with pedagogy. In Senior Schooling each Authority subject syllabus provides a curriculum framework that schools use to prepare a SWP for that particular subject (QSA, 2010d). Syllabus documents are contemporary, have a limited life (typically six years), and follow a process of official trialing and evaluation. When a syllabus is required to have major revisions in line with developing knowledge about curriculum, discipline-specific knowledge and expected assessment requirements, it is trial-piloted with volunteer schools. After analysis and evaluation of the trial by independent evaluators, a syllabus is re-written in line with this information. The syllabus is then phased in for general implementation across all schools in Queensland over a three year period.

Subject English is organised around the study of discourse, genre, register and textual features in texts. Students are given opportunities to develop the skills to “control and experiment with a range of language systems and associated genres and technologies” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 1). Assessment for units is primarily genre-based, with specified genres used as the primary means to demonstrate understandings about texts, language and language use.

The *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) provides definitions and characteristics of assessment purposes. It also provides information about the roles of students and teachers in meeting formative assessment purposes. Included in the Syllabus are statements of Exit Standards that must be met in order for students to be awarded one of five levels of achievement on exit from the course at the end of Year 12, as detailed earlier: Very High Achievement, High Achievement, Sound Achievement, Limited Achievement and Very Limited Achievement. Appendix A shows that these Exit Levels
of Achievement are based on the performance of three criteria: Knowledge and Control of Texts in Their Contexts; Knowledge and Control of Textual Features; and Knowledge and Application of the Constructedness of Texts. The criteria are derived from the general objectives of the course, and the principles of assessment given emphasis in the Syllabus (QBSSSSS, 2002b). Teachers are responsible for generating assessment criteria and standards based on these official statements of Exit Criteria and Standards for each summative assessment piece in Year 12 and they are to be used for both formative assessment and summative assessment purposes.

**Definitions and characteristics of formative assessment.** The statements that define formative assessment and summative assessment in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSSS, 2002b) are generic, common to all Senior syllabuses and not subject-specific in nature. Both formative assessment and summative assessment are defined in terms of purposes and they have distinct characteristics. Summative assessment is aligned with provision of “cumulative information on which levels of achievement are determined at exit from the course of study” (p. 21).

Because the definition of formative assessment is central to the discussion here, it is produced in full:

> Formative assessment is used to provide *feedback* to students, parents, and teachers about achievement over the course of study. This enables students and teachers to identify the students’ *strengths and weaknesses* so students may *improve* their achievement and better manage their own *learning*. The formative techniques used should be *similar* to summative assessment techniques, which students will meet later in the course. This provides students with experience in responding to particular types of tasks, under appropriate conditions. So that students can prepare for assessment tasks, it is advisable that each assessment technique can be used formatively before being used summatively [emphasis added]. (QBSSSSS, 2002b, p. 21)

In this definition, the purposes for which formative assessment is used are clearly distinct from those for summative assessment. For example, formative assessment includes the provision of feedback over the course of study, with a strong emphasis on the roles of teacher and student in identifying strengths and weaknesses. While the term “diagnosis” is not employed, this process involves the diagnosis of aspects of the student’s performance to be improved. As can be seen, it also includes an emphasis on the role of the student in two ways: the improvement of their achievement, and better management of their own learning. While the emphasis is on the roles of both teachers and students,
elsewhere in the Syllabus the increasing independence of the student is highlighted. This notion is discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Summative assessment, conversely, is recognised as providing “cumulative information on which levels of achievement are determined at exit from the course of study” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 21). Formative assessment and summative assessment purposes are therefore distinct, even though formative and summative assessment techniques “should be similar [emphasis added]”, as indicated above. While it is anticipated that summative assessment will also provide feedback, this is not directly associated with improvement. A key element of the description above is that formative assessment provides students with experience of formative techniques and types of tasks, in preparation or rehearsal for summative assessment.

A distinction is made in the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) between the use of information gathered formatively and that which is gathered summatively, and the use of information for certification and reporting purposes. The Syllabus description of the relationship between formative assessment and summative assessment seems to suggest that teachers use three assessment techniques—observation, consultation, and focused textual analysis—that are not restricted to a particular assessment purpose: “In both formative and summative assessment, opportunities exist to use these techniques to provide students with valuable information about their language use” (p. 24). Assessment techniques for observation and consultation include anecdotal records, peer-assessment and self-assessment, interviews, short responses and discussions. This is in keeping with Sadler’s proposal (1986d) that informal assessment techniques such as observations and consultations could be used for formal purposes associated with summative assessment, providing “corroborative data to help in the classification” (p. 2). However, this is not a focus of the Syllabus.

Emphasis is given to formative activities used to scaffold students’ learning and leading up to the production of summative assessment tasks: role-plays, discussions, journal entries and reading logs. This is differentiated from the role of “focused textual analysis for summative purposes [which] contributes to the requirements for verification” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 24). The evidence for verification therefore is recognised as coming from focused textual analysis in the form of graded written and spoken/signed tasks that are collected in student portfolios, referred to as student folios in Queensland.

As already discussed, the matter of balance between formative assessment and summative assessment was foregrounded by Sadler (1986e). In the Syllabus, balance
between formative and summative assessment lies in understanding that formative assessment and summative assessment tasks will both occur in units of work (QBSSSS, 2002b). Summative assessment occurs at the end of units of work and is used to arrive at an holistic summative judgement of student folios to award Exit Levels of Achievement at exit from the course. The holistic judgement is described in the Syllabus as an exercise in “classification”, as teachers match the folio “against the syllabus standards associated with exit criteria, to determine the level of achievement that best describes the pattern of performance in the folio as a whole” (p. 32).

A related understanding is that information used for summative purposes is to be both fullest, taken to mean comprehensive and across the range of general objectives, and latest, taken to mean from the most recent period “in which the general objectives are assessed” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 23). Under this distinction it is made clear that “as the assessment program in English is developmental, fullest and latest information will most likely come from Year 12” (p. 23). This advice appears to limit the contribution of Year 11 assessment information to the fullest information about student achievement. The common understanding in schools is that in “a two year course in Senior English the Year 12 assessment tasks are summative and Year 11 tasks formative” (anonymous source at QSA, personal communication, 2006).

The above definition advises that assessment techniques are to be used formatively, before being identified for summative assessment purposes. The apparent demarcation between Year 11 formative assessment and Year 12 summative assessment blurs the intention that all formal assessment pieces are used for formative purposes before a decision is taken that they are to contribute to summative assessment and reporting. The Syllabus provides advice that summative assessment pieces, usually occurring at the end of a unit of work, are planned in the SWP. This responsibility is explicit in the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 21): “it is necessary to plan the range of assessment techniques and instruments/tasks to be used, when they will be administered, and how they contribute to the determination of exit levels of achievement”. 8 The timing

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8 Schools are required to develop a detailed course overview that outlines unit titles and their focus, unit objectives (which are derived from the general objectives), learning experiences, resources, assessment tasks and conditions as part of their School Work Program. The course overview therefore includes the plan of how assessment will be carried out over the two year course. It is routinely referred to as the assessment overview.
of summative assessment in Year 12, therefore, is clearly focused on the production of summative assessment information at the end of units of work.

**Roles and interactions.** As noted, a major change under ROSBA occurred in the relationship between teachers and students. The *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) provides information about the enactment of formative assessment and the roles and interactions of teachers and students in formative assessment. The assumed readership for the Syllabus is the Head of Department (HOD) or Subject Coordinator responsible for English in a particular school and the practising teacher.

Analysis of the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) identifies three central roles for teachers in providing opportunities for formative assessment to occur for and with students. First, teachers have a central role in the provision of formative feedback to students. It is an expected and routine practice in Senior English that students submit summative assessment drafts for teacher feedback. According to the Syllabus, the feedback on these drafts is not to take the form of “copious teacher annotations and corrections and exhaustive line by line critical analysis”, and teacher response should be to “student drafting of a short section of the task” (p. 18). Specifically, the Syllabus advises that the role of the teacher should include the provision of feedback, but that “rather than the teacher-reader taking on the duties of proofreader and editor, it is vital for the classroom teacher to assist students in developing editorial independence, using the criteria and standards to develop students’ self-evaluative expertise” (p. 18). The goal of editorial independence is made clear in this statement. It is understood that this goal will be reached as the teacher develops students’ editorial independence using the criteria and standards as a tool. The role of the teacher is central, therefore, in the development of students’ self-evaluative expertise.

In a departure from the Discussion Papers, no explicit emphasis is given to teacher formative feedback against the assessment criteria and standards. This omission suggests that while great value is given to the provision of the teacher’s formative feedback, it is not officially stated that it should be informed by the assessment criteria and standards.

As indicated earlier, individual student folios are expected to contain 7 to 8 tasks at the end of Year 12, of which 4 to 5 are written tasks and 2 to 3 spoken/signed tasks. In

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9 Students with a hearing impairment are able to complete spoken assessment using sign language.
order for students to be awarded a minimum Sound Achievement at exit, their folio must meet the descriptors in both written and spoken/signed modes of tasks. The majority of summative assessment tasks are to be completed with teacher feedback.

Further, two tasks are to be written under examination conditions. In Queensland school-based assessment, examination conditions refers to pen-and-paper written examinations, usually undertaken in the classroom, under the direction of the teacher and to be marked by the teacher. For one of these examinations, students are not to have had access to the question prior to the examination. For the other examination, students may have had access to the question, and prepared notes are allowed into the examination room as prompts. At least one written task, but no more than two, must be completed by students after extensive access to human, library, and electronic resources that should be referenced.

The Syllabus legitimates the role of others in student improvement in relation to the production of summative assessment pieces for grading. As can be seen in Figure 1 (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 28), a range of other resources, both human and material, can legitimately be involved in providing support and feedback.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Stages of text production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Original Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside libraries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magazines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>member of family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>librarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second role for teachers in providing formative assessment opportunities is that they should make available to students the material resources and means to develop skills of self-evaluation. Further, they should ensure the conditions necessary for self-evaluation to occur. Specific mention is made of the need for teachers to provide opportunities for students to “gain expertise in evaluating their own and others’ work” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 9) so that they identify ways to improve their own work. It is understood that students will develop knowledge and skills in how to use feedback. A central tenet is that teachers should provide less support to students towards the end of the course.

Third, the teacher must mediate information required to assist students to gain self-evaluative skills. According to the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) the teacher should assist students to understand and use documents independently such as the task specifications and the accompanying assessment criteria and standards. It is suggested that teachers make opportunities for students to become involved in: task design and generation of task-specific criteria and standards; the use of self-evaluation checklists for
Assessment criteria and standards. Exit Achievement Standards descriptors provide the framework from which task-specific criteria and standards specifications are to be generated. The task-specific assessment criteria and standards provide statements of expected features and levels of quality to be used in judging achievement on assessment items. The language used to define, make explicit, or express the assessment criteria and standards is expected to be common across the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b), SWP and the assessment criteria and standards rubrics. They lead to overall judgments about the students’ work according to the exit criteria, which are derived from the general objectives of the course and stated in the Syllabus. As mentioned earlier, in subject English the assessment system is officially wholly qualitative. There is no rank ordering or other quantitative measure used.

Teachers routinely substitute the letter grades of ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’ and ‘E’ for the five Exit Levels of Achievement descriptors, outlined earlier, when generating individual task-specific assessment criteria and standards matrices or rubrics. Figure 2 (St. Catherine’s College, 2003) presents a section of a task-specific summative assessment criteria and standards document for an analytical exposition task showing the substitution of letter grades. The use of the five Exit Levels of Achievement descriptors is then reserved by teachers for final achievement level decisions made as part of the grade certification process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Exposition</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE &amp; CONTROL OF TEXTS IN THEIR CONTEXTS.</td>
<td>You show knowledge that meanings in texts are shaped by purpose, cultural context &amp; social situation by: exploiting the patterns &amp; conventions of a analytical exposition for your own purposes</td>
<td>You show knowledge that meanings in texts are shaped by purpose, cultural context &amp; social situation by: employing the patterns &amp; conventions of a analytical exposition for your own purposes</td>
<td>You show knowledge that meanings in texts are shaped by purpose, cultural context &amp; social situation by: mainly employing the patterns &amp; conventions of a analytical exposition for your own purposes</td>
<td>You show knowledge that meanings in texts are shaped by purpose, cultural context &amp; social situation by: using, but unevenly the patterns &amp; conventions of a analytical exposition for your own purposes</td>
<td>You show knowledge that meanings in texts are shaped by purpose, cultural context &amp; social situation by: occasionally using some conventions of an analytical exposition for some purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selecting &amp; synthesising substantial &amp; relevant subject matter</td>
<td>selecting &amp; usually synthesising sufficient relevant subject matter</td>
<td>selecting sufficient relevant subject matter</td>
<td>selecting some relevant subject matter</td>
<td>selecting some subject matter relating to this task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpreting, inferring from, analysing &amp; evaluating information &amp; ideas in considerable depth</td>
<td>interpreting, inferring from, analysing &amp; evaluating information &amp; ideas in depth</td>
<td>interpreting &amp; explaining information &amp; ideas, with some analysis &amp; evaluation</td>
<td>interpreting &amp; explaining some information &amp; ideas</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exploiting your role as reader analysing &amp; interpreting written texts, &amp; exploiting your relationship with readers as analyser of one or more narrative texts.</td>
<td>establishing &amp; maintaining your role as reader introducing analysing, &amp; interpreting written texts, &amp; controlling your relationship with readers as analyser of one or more narrative texts.</td>
<td>establishing your role as reader introducing analysing, &amp; interpreting written texts, &amp; maintaining the relationship with readers as analyser of one or more narrative texts.</td>
<td>generally establishing your role as reader introducing analysing, &amp; interpreting written texts, &amp; sometimes maintaining the relationship with readers as analyser of one or more narrative texts.</td>
<td>identifying the role of reader introducing analysing, &amp; interpreting written texts, &amp; making some use of the relationship with readers as analyser of one or more narrative texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Section of task-specific summative assessment criteria and standards - ‘A’–‘E’ standards (St. Catherine’s College, 2003).*
The task-specific assessment criteria and standards published by schools are also to be used as an aid for students as they acquire expertise in writing, speaking and self-assessment. This aligns with the image of students being assisted towards self-directed improvement described by Sadler (1986b), and reflects the direct connections made in the Discussion Papers between criteria and standards and an increase in student self-evaluation, or self-assessment, as they come to “exercise control over some key aspects of their learning” (p. 2). This includes an emphasis on “the provision of task expectations in terms of assessment criteria and standards” (Findlay, 1987a, p. 1).

The Syllabus understandings are similar to those included in the Discussion Papers, with task-specific assessment criteria and standards used for formative and summative assessment purposes. According to the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b), students must be informed of the assessment criteria and standards against which their work will be assessed, prior to commencing work on an assessable item. Further, the assessment criteria and standards are to be used by teachers and students for purposes associated with both formative assessment and summative assessment.

As indicated above, the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) describes several activities that could develop students’ evaluative expertise. These include reflections on spoken/signed tasks to consider how responses meet the task criteria and standards and a recommendation that students gain expertise through their “participation in task design and generation of task-specific criteria and standards” (p. 9). The suggestion that students participate in task design and the generation of task-specific criteria and standards is problematic in practice. Due to the process of SWP accreditation or approval these materials are often centrally produced in a school by a Head of Department or group of teachers. This observation extends to the approved framework and terminology for the expected statements of assessment standards, consistent with Syllabus requirements. The aim is for consistency in how assessment criteria and standards are formulated for each task.

As outlined in Chapter 1, Year 12 folios of students’ completed pieces of work are used to determine the overall grade to be awarded on completion of the Senior course of study. A profile of achievement is updated throughout the year as evidence is gathered. Pitman (1991) associated this profiling with a formative purpose: students could maintain their own record and “take action to improve achievement” (p. 11). This advice to teachers is
of interest in this study as it explicitly identifies how profiles have an intended function to support student self-improvement.

In the Syllabus definition of formative assessment the role of parents is restricted to their receiving formative feedback about achievement over the course of study. However, there is a possible role for parents in formative assessment through contribution to the text production process, discussed previously (see Figure 1). The requirements for students to document this process for each summative assessment piece involve the nomination of human and material resources that have been accessed during text production. While parents are not specifically named, it is accepted in the Syllabus that these resources could include family members. The *English Subject Guide* (QBSSSS, 2002a), a document prepared for parents of school students enrolled in Senior English, describes ways in which parents can assist their children. A contradiction exists between the description of the role of parents provided in the Guide and the possible role of parents in the provision of formative feedback outlined in the Syllabus. In the Guide, parents are described as having a support role. This role does not explicitly extend to the provision of formative feedback or direct advice on a piece of work expected to contribute to the body of summative assessment for reporting achievement on course completion.

**Individual students.** The Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) emphasises formative assessment for “particular student groups and individual needs” (p. 17). General advice is given that equitable treatment of students means teachers must be “proactive in finding out about the best ways to meet the special needs, in terms of learning and assessment, of particular students” (p. 42). Special consideration for particular students might involve “alternative teaching approaches, assessment plans and learning experiences” (p. 29). Advice is provided in *Special Consideration: Exemption and Special Arrangements in Senior Secondary School-based Assessment* (QBSSSS, 1994, revised QSA, 2004) and *Policy on Special Provisions for School-based Assessments in Authority and Authority-registered Subjects* (QSA, 2009) that standard assessment requirements can be adjusted in reasonable circumstances. In the latter document, this involves varying the conditions of the assessment piece to enable students with particular learning needs to have opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required. For example, a reasonable adjustment is to allow
additional time for students with specific learning needs. However, specific advice is given that the criteria and standards should be applied equally to all students’ work.

**Take-up of the Syllabus.** The implementation of the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) was not uncontested. The usual process of Syllabus revision and rewriting, trialling and piloting was prolonged by controversies surrounding its theoretical basis, and specifically its so-called critical literacy focus, due in part to a “reluctance to accept critical literacy as a dominant approach to the teaching of Senior English” (Johnson, 2002, p. 49). This saw the Senior Syllabus move from a *Trial-Pilot English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, September 1999a), to a re-written *Extended Trial-Pilot English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, November, 1999b). A key difference was that a model that outlined the inter-relatedness between discourse, genre, register and textual features had been deleted from the original version. This came about as a result of criticisms from outside of schools involved in the Trial-Pilot, part of “a protracted struggle in Queensland about how to configure the relationship between language, literacy and textual studies in the senior syllabus for English” (Wyatt-Smith, 2000, p. 71). Luke (2000) found that “a major critique came from those who argued that many teachers were not ready for the transition from cultural heritage and personal growth models” (p. 458). The QBSSSS (1999b) anticipated that the new draft of the Syllabus could be read “as being permissive of a wider range of approaches to teaching Senior English than was the September 1999 draft” (p. 1). However, the version of the Syllabus produced for general implementation in 2002 was considered to be without a strong theoretical basis. Amidst this controversy, the official assessment criteria were changed to include a third criterion namely constructedness of texts, which, in turn, required teachers to re-design curriculum and assessment.

**Main Understandings From Policy**

Four main understandings can be drawn from this discussion of formative assessment in the Queensland system:

1. formative assessment is primarily for improvement purposes;
2. formative assessment is distinct from summative assessment;
3. the teacher is central to the provision of formative feedback;
4. It is expected that students will develop increasing independence over the two year period of the course.

The Radford Review revealed an emerging link between formative assessment practices of teachers and student improvement in the Queensland model of school-based assessment. This was specifically developed under ROSBA through the Discussion Papers. The connection between assessment and improvement emerges as a priority in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b).

The Discussion Papers revealed an emerging clarity around the relationship between formative and summative assessment purposes. Key to this was McMeniman’s emphasis (1986) on their distinctiveness, their complementarity and their use for dual purposes. Two different, even competing understandings about the timing of formative assessment relative to summative assessment emerge in the Syllabus. The first is that formative assessment occurs earlier in the course and summative assessment occurs later. While the word rehearsal is not employed in the document, formative assessment is understood to have a clear rehearsal function. The second is that formative assessment and summative assessment must both be present in discrete units of work.

The significance of this study lies in the opportunity it presents to examine how teachers carry out formative assessment as part of their actual classroom practice and as it relates to summative assessment for certification purposes. In the case reports, questions are raised about the understandings teachers hold about the purposes of formative assessment in Year 12 English. The investigation also focuses on how teachers meet formative purposes associated with improvement in relation to summative assessment, given priority in this high-stakes environment. As discussed in Chapter 6, the high-stakes Year 12 setting has a strong influence on teachers’ formative assessment practices.

While the Discussion Papers and Syllabus emphasise the provision of teacher feedback for diagnosis leading to improvement, there is little guidance about the specific nature of that feedback in the Syllabus. No explicit advice is given that teachers’ formative feedback should be expressed in terms of the assessment criteria and standards, or achievement levels. In keeping with the importance given to the increasing independence of students, the advice about teacher feedback centres on the need for it to decrease across the course. It is also important to note, as discussed earlier, that the Syllabus legitimates the role
of human resources, including family members, in providing feedback for the improvement of student achievement.

This chapter highlights the clear emphasis given to the place of teacher feedback in improvement, but ideas about the role of the teacher in increasing student agency have also gained currency in the Queensland system over time. Since the implementation of Radford and ROSBA the support role for teachers in developing students’ evaluative experience has broadened, and the role of students in formative assessment has gained prominence. According to the 2002 Syllabus, teachers provide feedback for improvement and develop students’ evaluative expertise so that they can become increasingly independent of the teachers’ feedback. Student knowledge of the assessment criteria and standards to recognise the standard of their own work, and the use of the assessment criteria and standards as a tool to self-monitor and improve the standard of this work is seen as key to this increasing independence. The potential of the system is for teachers to make available quality assessment opportunities for students to build evaluative expertise and develop self-monitoring skills through both the provision of official standards and from opportunities to receive feedback from the teacher and others.

This chapter has presented the key understandings of formative assessment in the Queensland system of school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment system context discussed in Chapter 1. The analyses of key policy and policy related documents have provided an overview of the understandings of formative assessment that underpin this system. The following chapter presents a literature review of formative assessment and examines implications of commonly held as well as contested understandings about formative assessment for this study of the formative assessment practices of Queensland Senior English teachers. Main understandings of policy are carried forward into Chapter 3 as part of the warrant for the study.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

This review of the research and professional literature on formative assessment presents three recurring thematic threads that were identified during the critical review and analysis process:

(1) Purposes;

(2) Practices;

(3) Roles and interactions.

As used here, the term thematic “thread” is taken to refer to the dominant understandings about formative assessment revealed in the research literature. For organisational purposes each thread is presented in turn as a separate chapter part, with discussion arranged around the identification and elaboration of the key messages. The discussion of the thematic threads in the above sequence has deliberate logic. While interactions among participants are the focus of the socio-cultural approach adopted in this study, discussion of interactions has most relevance when the underpinning understandings of purpose and practice have been clarified.

The final part of the chapter presents the warrant for the present study based on findings from the review of literature. Broadly speaking, most research on formative assessment originates in education and assessment systems different from the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland assessment system. This larger corpus of research is examined for its overall contribution to understandings of formative assessment as well as the key insights that it makes available about the Queensland assessment system in particular.

Several major reviews are central to formative assessment research. Black and Wiliam’s (1998) review of formative assessment research took as its starting point earlier reviews by Natriello (1987) and Crooks (1988). Black and Wiliam’s reflection on formative assessment in the interim decade demonstrated a shift of focus in assessment research away from “the properties of restricted forms of test” (1998, p. 7) and towards assessment and classroom learning.
A range of research methods, qualitative and quantitative, are in evidence in the literature. Longitudinal studies of formative assessment practices are limited in number and case studies dominate. Hattie’s (2009) meta-analysis of formative assessment practices is the only recent large overview of studies examining influences on student achievement. Hattie presented and synthesised data on the impact of a range of variables on student achievement, including teachers’ formative assessment practices.

Work by Sadler (1983, 1986a,b,c,d,e,f, 1987, 1989, 1998, 2005, 2007, 2009a,b,c, 2010) is also key to this review of literature. Sadler’s theorising of formative assessment is central to the field of study of formative assessment, extending to its application at system level in the state of Queensland, Australia.

Assessment for Learning research, including the research and conceptualisation completed by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) in the United Kingdom (ARG, 2002a,b, 2006, 2008; Mansell, James, & ARG, 2009) is also important in this discussion. Grounded in formative assessment understandings, it promotes the use of assessment information for improvement purposes, with particular emphasis on the role of the learner. The ARG’s 10 Assessment for Learning Principles (ARG, 2002a) set out key understandings about formative assessment that underpin much of the recent research into classroom practice conducted in the United Kingdom and some countries in Europe. Assessment for Learning has been the focus of research in the United States (Shepard, 2000, 2005; Stiggins, 2005). It is sufficiently of interest in Australia that the Curriculum Corporation (n.d.) has produced an Assessment for Learning website. Other nations have introduced Assessment for Learning principles, with their own local flavour. One example of this is the Assessment is For Learning movement in Scotland, which has recently lost prominence due to changes in government priorities (Hutchinson & Young, 2011). Canadian researcher, Lorna Earl (2003) expanded on the notion of Assessment for Learning, particularly in relation to the roles of students, and her work is discussed further in this review of literature.

In addition to Sadler’s work and the Assessment for Learning research, this review presents formative assessment research produced by researchers from a range of other nations, including, but not limited to: Bennett, Brookhart, Shepard and Stiggins from the United States; Bell, Cowie, Crooks and Hattie from New Zealand; Carless and Lee from Hong Kong; and Earl, Davies, Laveault and Shulha from Canada.
The review of literature involved searches of national and international journals and texts of formative assessment, and related terms, subject English and literacy, including reading and writing, Senior English, and Senior English in Queensland in particular. It is significant that only one study could be found that provided empirical evidence of formative assessment practices in Queensland Senior English classrooms: Wyatt-Smith (2001). Evidence-based studies of formative assessment in subject English in middle schooling classrooms in Queensland, and formative assessment in Senior English in other nations, including Canada, England, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Scotland, the United States and the West Indies are discussed in this chapter. Relevant research into English and writing in post-secondary school college and university settings from the United States is also presented.

The critical review presents different accounts of formative assessment from the research literature. Through the discussion of the thematic threads, points of consensus and divergence in researchers’ views are highlighted.

**Thematic Thread One: Purposes**

The investigation of the literature brought to light both a link between formative assessment purposes and practices and several key messages about formative assessment purposes. First, formative assessment is strongly associated with the purpose of improvement. Many studies reported significant gains from formative assessment interventions or classroom practices that are specifically developed as part of the research. However, what counts as evidence of the gains from formative assessment practices is not consistent across all analysed research. Second, in the main, formative assessment purposes and summative assessment purposes are determined by assessment systems, whether external-examination systems or school-based. Some value is attributed to formative use of information generated primarily for summative assessment purposes. Third, it is generally expected that formative assessment information should be used by teachers to adjust their teaching although the extent to which this is a common practice for all teachers is contested in a small number of evidence-based studies.

**Formative assessment and improvement.** It is generally understood in the research literature that the primary difference between formative assessment and summative assessment centres on the purposes to which each is put. As indicated in Chapter 1, the term
“formative” is related to formation, development or growth. Improvement is viewed as its key purpose. Scriven (1967) originally used the term “formative” in relation to the evaluation of curriculum and teaching, and subsequent adaptations, or improvements, based on gathered information. Bloom, Hastings and Madaus (1971) first employed the term “formative evaluation” in relation to student learning. While summative evaluation was associated with testing for grading and certification, formative evaluation was described as “another type of evaluation which all who are involved—student, teacher, curriculum maker—would welcome because they find it so useful in helping them improve what they wish to do” (p. 117). This emphasis on improvement purposes has significance for the way formative assessment is understood to function. In the first edition of his seminal work on educational assessment, Rowntree (1977) identified the concentration in the research literature on grading and ranking, summative purposes of assessment. He emphasised instead the importance of formative assessment, which he also referred to as pedagogic assessment, with purposes related to potential and improvement (1977). Natriello (1987) and Crooks (1988) have since provided similar advice.

From the early 1990s, researchers in assessment have increasingly focussed attention on formative assessment for improvement (Brown, 1994). There are strong links between formative assessment and efforts to improve student achievement (Black, 1999; Black & Wiliam, 1998; 2001; Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002). Indeed, in the United Kingdom, Black and Wiliam’s (1998) major review of the literature on assessment for learning established the importance of formative assessment and described its purpose as the improvement of learning. Chappuis and Stiggins (2002), writing in relation to formative assessment in the United States, described the political bent towards large-scale, external testing, but encouraged the developing focus of teachers on “day-to-day classroom assessment for purposes beyond measurement” (p. 40).

Evidence of improvement. While research focuses on using formative assessment for improvement, the literature diverges on what counts as evidence of improvement. Black and Wiliam (1998) provided research evidence that linked formative assessment innovations and interventions “designed to strengthen the frequent feedback that students receive” (p. 7), with increases in student achievement. They described the achievement gains for formative assessment interventions as “among the largest ever reported for educational interventions”
(p. 61), based on quantitative and qualitative investigations into practice interventions. This is quite different from the assessment setting of this study, which provides insights into practices in a system that has been stable for a period of time. Referring to the United Kingdom and United States, Bennett (2011) agreed that improvement does take place, but asserted that the claims for improvement are not as large as reported. He cited evidence from the Black and Wiliam review and subsequent research using the review’s findings, to argue that the claims have been overstated in the literature, in respect of the reported effect sizes.

Terms such as improving learning, supporting learning and improving achievement are often used interchangeably (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003; Cowie, 2005b; Harlen & James, 1997; Marshall & Wiliam, 2006; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005a, 2005b; Sadler, 1989). There are divergent perspectives on what constitutes the evidence of improvement, and whether achievement gains as measured in performance and products can be counted as evidence of learning improvement. Hargreaves (2005) provided five distinctive categories of Assessment for Learning purposes from surveys of English school teachers and head teachers in England. One of the five is its use for “monitoring pupils’ performance against targets or objectives” (p. 214), with target-setting by the teacher. Hargreaves noted that emphasis is given to “performance” in key United Kingdom Authority definitions of formative assessment. She noted that there are similarities between this emphasis, and Sadler’s references (1989) to performance and production in formative assessment.

Some researchers described the purposes of formative assessment as including learning gains for students and the raising of student achievement (ARG, 2002a; Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2001; Black et al., 2003; Cowie, 2005a; Marshall & Wiliam, 2006; Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004). Findlay (1987a, p. 2) made a link between feedback and the “rate of learning”, with students’ levels of achievement also improved by feedback. Peterson and Siadat (2009) came to similar conclusions, providing empirical evidence that formative feedback on frequently staged quizzes led into “continuous readjustment of teaching and learning strategies” (p. 92) and subsequent improved academic achievement of primary school students of algebra. In relation to subject English, Marshall (2004) described improvement as progression towards an horizon, with a student’s improvement mapped against previous performances. This is discussed later in relation to defined criteria.
Carless (2007) questioned the notion of improvement as expressed in test results and the association of this with student learning, asking whether “improved performance in high-stakes assessments actually equates to enhanced learning” (p. 180). It was also his view that for formative assessment to make a “significant contribution to learning” it should not be restricted to the preparation of assignments, or for high-stakes examinations. In this way, the danger of surface learning for test readiness purposes would be avoided.

**Formative assessment purposes as determined by system context.** The analysis of the literature highlighted the relationship between formative assessment purposes and summative assessment purposes and the requirements of the particular assessment systems in which that assessment is carried out. Black and Wiliam (1998) considered their review represented a shift in thinking that saw the movement of “formative assessment studies away from systems, with its emphasis on the formative-summative interface [original emphasis]” and towards classroom processes (Black & Wiliam, 2003, p. 628). However, policy that sets out assessment system requirements also establishes how formative and summative assessment practices relate or co-exist, impacting classroom practice. Institutional and policy contexts are seen as strong influences on teachers’ assessment practices (Black et al., 2003; Klenowski, 2004). Laveault (2010) indicated that government and local administrations have increasingly recognised the “impact of better and more efficient classroom-assessment practices on student learning” (p. 432). Policies resulting from this recognition are varied, strongly influenced by national and local contexts. Lee’s study (2007) of 26 Hong Kong secondary teachers found that teacher feedback in English writing classes of Years one to five of secondary school (there are six years in total) was influenced by institutional contexts and values. In the context of Lee’s study, feedback policy mandated particular types of feedback interactions, which consequently limited the potential for improvement. A quantitative study of Israeli primary school teachers’ use of Assessment for Learning practices (Birenbaum et al., 2011) found that external testing procedures influence these practices, but that the context of the school was an important influence on classroom practices.

In Scotland, a review of assessment practice showed that “arrangements for assessment originally intended to raise standards of attainment had created tension between assessment for learning and assessment for monitoring and accountability” (Hutchinson &
Young, 2011, p. 64) and that teachers were reliant on centrally provided national assessments to report on attainment. Hutchinson and Young also observed that there were “reservations about relying on teachers’ judgements because of the perceived risk of introducing ‘subjectivity’ and attendant unreliability and unfairness into the system” (p. 64). This resulted in a re-focussing of government support from the government-funded Assessment is for Learning (AifL) Development Program introduced in 2002, to Curriculum for Excellence, emphasising the place of national assessments.

A common characteristic of assessment systems internationally is that the final year of secondary schooling is a high-stakes year focused on certification. In their study of New Zealand teachers’ use of formative assessment to assist Year 11 Science students meeting learning outcomes as part of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), Hume and Coll (2009) noted that summative assessment, whether external testing or teacher assessment, drives “decisions about the content and delivery of senior school classroom programmes because teachers want to secure good results for their students” (p. 270).

Research shows that there is a tendency for formative assessment to serve summative assessment purposes in systems featuring external summative testing (Black et al., 2003; Harlen, 2005; OECD, 2005a). Formative assessment was identified as struggling “for its status and development” (Black, 1998, p. 120) at the time of Black and Wiliam’s review. In 2005 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released research that examined exemplary formative assessment practice in secondary schools in eight countries, including Australia, as represented by Queensland. The report made the assertion that where summative tests have high visibility teachers often feel compelled to “teach to the test” and students are encouraged to perform well on tests, as opposed to focussing on goals of learning or developing understanding (2005a, p. 24). In such a scenario, formative assessment would be focused towards meeting summative assessment goals.

In a multiple case study conducted in the United States, Brookhart and Bronowicz (2003) examined students’ perceptions of classroom assessments. They found that the focus of secondary school students changed towards grading rather than learning, and that this was attributable to the assessment system: “Changes in American grading practices and uses would be required to maintain this student focus on learning” (p. 240). Referring to “high stakes testing cultures”, Stobart (2008, p. 5) noted that teachers regularly ask students to
complete practice tests and then monitor the test scores, with teachers describing this as formative assessment to improve students’ test outcomes, rather than as the summative assessment processes they would appear to be. James and Pedder’s investigation (2006) of Assessment for Learning practices in England used teacher surveys administered to 558 teachers across 32 infant, primary and secondary schools to find that while teachers value the dimensions of assessment of making learning explicit and promoting learning autonomy, there was a gap between these stated values and their practices, with greater value given by teachers to performance orientation.

In the main, the discussion of formative and summative assessment in the literature rests on the understanding that there is a clear demarcation between the two assessment purposes. However, Biggs (1998) made a strong argument that this need not be the case. In theoretical discussions, the “formative versus summative distinction is assumed somehow to be fundamental” (Newton, 2007, p. 154), but the alternative position is also taken that summative assessment outcomes can be used for formative assessment purposes. Black and Wiliam (1998) excluded a discussion of summative assessment and improvement from their review because it is their view that summative assessment does not lead to improvement in the same way as formative assessment. Biggs (1998) countered this argument thus:

... there is a powerful interaction between FA [formative assessment] and SA [summative assessment] that could usefully be incorporated in an overall synthesis, so that both backwash (from SA) and feedback (from FA) are conceptualised within the same framework. Then indeed one might have a powerful enhancement to learning, using such a synthesis to engineer backwash from SA so that the effects were positive, the backwash from SA supporting the feedback from FA. (p. 106)

As described by Biggs, synthesising assessment purposes so that backwash and feedback work in combination, offers a “powerful enhancement to learning”. Biggs tied this to the use of defined assessment criteria, relating to the “intended curriculum”.

Arguments for the usefulness of summative assessment for formative purposes featured in the Assessment for Learning research, which focused on the use of all assessment information to “make decisions that affect teaching and learning in the short term future” (Harlen, 2006, p. 104). Working within this Assessment for Learning approach, Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam (2004) successfully assisted teachers of several discipline areas, including English, to devise formative assessment strategies to focus on preparation, reflection and review for and of summative assessment pieces. This included the formative

Stobart (2008) asserted that the distinction between formative assessment and summative assessment can be relaxed through teacher-devised assessments that currently work alongside external testing in the British system. These school-based assessments allow formative assessment and summative assessment to function as “part of a loop rather than independent[ly] of each other” (p. 5). Students work formatively as they complete teacher-assessed items against detailed, levelled outcome statements. Having met the outcomes, students then use that information to work towards subsequent levels. Thus, while researchers noted a relationship between system and the implementation of formative assessment, they also indicated that externally focused assessment systems should not preclude implementation of formative assessment by teachers in classrooms.

**The adjustment of teaching and learning.** There is general consensus in the literature that teachers should adjust their teaching based on formative assessment information that they gather (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2005; Bloom et al., 1971; Brookhart, 2007; Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002; Cowie & Bell, 1999; Earl, 2003; Haigh & Dixon, 2007; McMillan, 2003, 2007; Peterson & Siadat, 2009; Stiggins, 2005; Stobart, 2006). For Black and Wiliam (2001), formative assessment activities yield information that should be used “to modify the teaching and learning activities … [and] … such assessment becomes ‘formative assessment’ when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs [original emphasis]” (p. 7).

This pedagogic focus on formative assessment is viewed as characteristic of subject English. The adjustment of teaching and learning in subject English is described as integral to the nature of the subject itself and has repercussions for planning. Hodgen and Marshall (2005, p. 163) suggested that “a well-planned lesson with clear learning outcomes is insufficient to ensure success” in subject English, where interactions between the teacher and the class determine the direction a lesson will take. The importance of this is indicated by Marshall and Drummond (2006) who called for a revision of the Assessment for Learning practices: questioning, feedback, sharing criteria and self-assessment. Reporting on the work undertaken during the King’s-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project
Marshall and Drummond focused in particular on the research conducted in Year 8 English classrooms. They identified the importance of the way that teachers “conceptualize and sequence the tasks undertaken by pupils” in English lessons, finding that “the nature of these tasks affects all subsequent interactions within the class” (p. 147). Moni, van Kraayenoord, and Baker (2003) presented a similar view in their study of the discourses of literacy at work in Year 8 English classrooms in Queensland, concluding that literacy assessment is “socially constructed by classroom members in the course of interactions around assessment-related activities” (p. 68).

From outside subject English, Peterson and Siadat (2009) undertook a longitudinal experimental study that required post-secondary, college-level instructors of elementary algebra to give frequent formative feedback on multiple-choice quizzes. The researchers identified that improvement occurred with the adjustment of teaching and learning strategies. Other research challenges the notion that teachers adjust their work in light of formative assessment information. In Dorman and Knightley’s study (2006) of Science students’ perceptions of assessment in United Kingdom secondary schools, the authors refuted the finding by Goodrum, Hackling, and Rennie (2001) that assessment is currently a key component of teaching and learning practices in schools. They made the assertion that “in practice, there is little evidence that teachers actually use diagnostic or formative assessment strategies to inform planning and teaching” (p. 48). Heritage, Kim, Vendliinski, and Herman (2009) presented similar findings in their study of Year 6 teachers of Mathematics, concluding that the use of assessment information to plan subsequent instruction is a relatively difficult task for teachers. This type of finding is not restricted to research into subjects other than English with similar findings identified in Aitken’s study (2000) that examined New Zealand English teachers’ accounts of their formative assessment practices.

Mention must be made of the French-language literature, which features the concept of regulation as a broader approach to formative assessment. It includes remediation, a form of intervention when students return to a task they have failed to master and work towards attaining the original objectives of the task, and interactive regulation involving active reflection and self-assessment. With reference to the discussion here of the adjustment of learning Allal (2010) suggested that proactive regulation occurs in the planning, involving the “differentiation of instruction to ensure enrichment and consolidation of learning”
(p. 348). As Laveault (2010) explained, in this description formative assessment goes beyond the remediation of student work and “includes regulation of teachers’ future instructional activities to the point where decisions on instructional strategies and assessment are closely related” (p. 434).

**Thematic Thread Two: Practices**

Published writing on the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment practices focuses on research into existing classroom practices, as well as interventions to develop formative assessment practices in the classroom context. Four key messages were identified through the analysis. First, a close association is made between pedagogy and formative assessment. A broad range of formative assessment practices are present in the literature, from classroom questioning to peer- and self-assessment. Second, feedback is a key characteristic of formative assessment practice, with the emphasis on feedback from the teacher to the student for improvement purposes. Good feedback is generally agreed to be task-focused, descriptive and immediate. Different opinions exist as to the usefulness of marks in formative feedback and whether or not verbal or written feedback is more closely linked to improvement. Third, the use of defined standards for improvement purposes is contested. This debate centres on what constitutes reference levels and the place of defined and articulated criteria and standards in relation to feedback and self-assessment for improvement. Fourth, there is a growing recognition of the utility of technology in formative assessment practices.

**A broad range of formative assessment practices: links to pedagogy.** It can be established from the literature that formative assessment possibilities are wide-ranging, but that a close association is made between pedagogy and formative assessment (ARG, 2002a,b; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Carless, 2007; Shepard, 2005). According to the ARG (2002a) formative assessment is closely associated with pedagogy and is particularly focused “on how students learn” (p.2). It has been described as situated “at the boundary between classroom assessment and teaching” (Carless, 2007, p. 172). This aligns with Shepard’s (2005) view that there are similarities between formative assessment and instructional scaffolding, Brookhart’s (2007, p. 49) assertion that effective formative assessment blends “assessment and instructional functions”, and Gardner’s claim that formative assessment is
“what good teachers do” (Gardner, 2006, p. 2). Black and Wiliam’s (1998) broad description of formative assessment included:

… all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes “formative assessment” when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs. (p. 7)

Several characteristics of formative assessment are evident here. First, formative assessment is associated strongly with information to be used as feedback, thus situating feedback as central to formative assessment. Second, the range of formative assessment opportunities is of itself broad, but must have a relationship to information production and use. Third, and of interest to the socio-cultural approach of this study, both teachers and students have roles to play in formative assessment, the generation of formative information and student improvement. These understandings are referred to in this section of the review.

In the literature several assessment techniques or activities that count as formative assessment are described. After Black and Wiliam (1998) found that formative assessment was not widely understood by teachers, they engaged in further research to gather empirical evidence of the development and use of formative assessment. KMOFAP (Black et al., 2004) involved secondary school teachers of Mathematics, Science and English working with researchers to reflect on their practices, develop formative assessment strategies in order to improve achievements for students, and evaluate these practices. Black et al. identified a range of formative assessment activities from their data including: questioning, feedback through grading, peer- and self-assessment and the formative use of summative tests; the last specific to external testing systems. These categories were further developed by Wiliam (2005) to focus more broadly on classroom questioning, feedback, sharing criteria and learning intentions with learners, and student peer- and self-assessment.

In Table 1 the categories of formative assessment practices established by Black et al. (2004), and Wiliam (2005) are used as organisers to represent practices identified across the literature and discussed below. An important consideration is the continuum of agency of the nature of roles and relationships of teachers and students as part of classroom practice, including a focus on who has the responsibility for providing feedback. At one end of the range of formative opportunities is Black et al.’s provision of wait time during classroom
questioning sequences, while at the other end is students’ self-assessment and self-monitoring using explicit assessment criteria and standards (Sadler, 1989). Also included in the continuum is peer-assessment, involving feedback from peers to students. Students’ and teachers’ roles are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Table 1

*A Range of Classroom Formative Assessment Practices Identified in the Existing Literature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Specific practices from across the literature</th>
<th>Continuum of agency in formative assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom questioning</td>
<td>• Teacher questioning (classroom discussion)</td>
<td>Feedback information from teacher to student</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Wait time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Observations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>• Feedback characteristics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Descriptive and task-related feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Timing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Grades</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing criteria</td>
<td>• Reference levels</td>
<td>Feedback information from peers to student</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Learning intentions and success criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student peer- and self-assessment</td>
<td>• Explicit assessment criteria and standards</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Connecting criteria and standards</td>
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**Classroom questioning, wait time, observations.** In the published literature, value is given to informal formative assessment interactions. Informal formative assessment in the form of on-going assessment of students by teachers and continual self- and peer-assessment, is viewed as “highly influential for the individual learner” by Broadfoot (1996, p. 45). It occurs through informal responses that occur during “regular work” in classrooms (Harlen, Gipps, Broadfoot, & Nuttall, 1994) and includes interactions between teachers and individual students, small groups and the whole class (Carless, 2007). Ruiz-Primo’s overview (2011) of empirically-based studies of Science classroom talk identified the importance of assessment
“conversations” that occur through everyday learning activities in classrooms and have a formative purpose. These conversations take the form of classroom questioning and discussion, with the emphasis on using questions to “raise issues about which a teacher needs information or about which the students need to think” (Black et al., 2004, p. 13). Feedback occurs in conjunction with the exploration and development of ideas.

According to Marshall’s observations (2007) of Year 8 English classrooms “talk, debate, and reflection are essential pedagogic tools” (p. 137) in student progress in English and the humanities, more so than in Mathematics and Science classrooms. Sawyer, Ayers, and Dinham’s study (2000) of effective Year 12 English teachers in New South Wales found that classroom practices were built on cooperation and group interaction, in keeping with the “strong emphasis [in subject English] on classroom talk and group work” (p. 55). Associating this type of pedagogy with formative assessment, Marshall (2007) described teachers of English and humanities as recognising the talk and discussion strategies described as formative as “best practice within their discipline” (p. 137). Empirical evidence of discussion-based practices positively influencing students’ literacy performance was provided by Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran (2003). In their quantitative study of 974 Years 7, 8, 10 and 11 students of English in 19 schools in the United States, Applebee et al. found that “spontaneous scaffolding or support for development ideas…during open discussions is a powerful tool for learning” (p. 685).

The KMOFAP focused on interventions into teacher practice, providing data drawn in part from secondary English classrooms. Harrison (2005) reported that changes in formative practice had “far-reaching effects on the teachers, their students and their schools” (p. 262), with a focus on questioning practices leading to an improvement in classroom dialogue that “allowed both teachers and students to find out not only what they knew and did not know but also what areas of learning did they partly know” (p. 257). Black et al. (2004) included wait time as a formative process, providing empirical evidence from KMOFAP, that the provision of wait time in classroom talk enables students to enter into classroom discussions in a more informed way, with the aim to thoughtful improvement. In an empirical study of Scottish primary and junior secondary schools involved in Project One of the AiFL Development Programme, aimed at helping teachers improve their formative assessment practices (Kirton, Hallam, Peffers, Robertson, & Stobart, 2007), student feedback data
indicated that increased wait time was a helpful strategy in formulating responses to teacher questions, which then became part of the feedback loop.

Observations are widely accepted assessment practice in primary classrooms as reported in empirical studies (Torrance & Pryor, 2001; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2003). The OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia Report (2011) provided evidence that observations are commonly used in Australian primary schools for summative assessment purposes. The same finding is not reported for secondary schools and there is generally no strong empirical evidence of use of observations in high-stakes secondary setting. Bloom et al. (1971) originally associated formative observations with “particular learning necessary for movement towards mastery” (p. 61), separating observations from summative judgements and situating them in the improvement process. This notion was central to Marshall and Wiliam (2006) who advocated the use of observations for formative purposes in secondary English where simple observations made orally about a student’s piece of work could encourage the development of ideas during the drafting stage of text production.

**Feedback as a key characteristic.** Feedback is identified as a key characteristic of formative assessment, featuring in theoretical and empirically-based research of formative assessment. However, there are some conflicting reports on its effects. According to Hattie’s later observations, his synthesis of 134 meta-analyses of influences on achievement conducted in 1992 found that “feedback was among the most powerful” (Hattie, 2009, p. 173). Kluger and DeNisi’s earlier review (1996) of research on effects of feedback interventions on performance found that feedback was directly associated with improvement in 60 per cent of studies examined, but in over a third of studies the effects of feedback were negative. Efficacy was linked to the type of feedback provided, discussed below. Shute’s (2008) more recent review of research on feedback noted that “despite the plethora of research on the topic the specific mechanisms relating feedback to learning are still mostly murky, with few (if any) general conclusions” (p. 156).

There is agreement by many researchers that interactions featuring feedback from teacher to student are central to the learning and improvement process (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2001; Butler & Winne, 1995; Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002; Gipps & Stobart, 2003;
As described by Peterson and Irving (2008), Knight (2003) presented a continuum of definitions of feedback. Figure 3 is based on this continuum.

At one extreme of the above continuum all dialogue that occurs in class to support learning is considered feedback (Askew & Lodge, 2000). Marshall and Wiliam (2006) identified two forms of classroom dialogue associated with formative assessment in subject English classrooms: that which occurs among teacher and students; and discussion that occurs between students. Both are considered central to the goal of “making progress” in English. The middle position on the continuum is taken by Tunstall and Gipps (1996) whose typology of teacher feedback to young children has resonance for this discussion. It was their contention that feedback is evaluative or descriptive, with the latter referenced to norms, or description of achievement, competence or improvement. At the other extreme is Sadler’s (1989) notion of feedback “defined in terms of its effect rather than its informational content” (p. 120) as specific information for the purpose of assisting students to improve their performance. This idea is based on Ramaprasad’s description (1983) of feedback as information to alter a gap between performance and an improved level.

A general consensus exists that good feedback gives students information about the demands of the task in which they are involved, rather than themselves (Gipps, McCallum, & Hargreaves, 2000; Stobart, 2006; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). Kluger and DeNisi (1996) indicated that the effectiveness of feedback interventions generally decreased “as attention move[d] up the hierarchy (of feedback interventions) closer to the self and away from the task” (p. 254). Butler (1987) provided empirical evidence of the effect of such differences, through her study of Year 5 and 6 Israeli students as they completed multiple assessment tasks with multiple feedback opportunities. She compared students’ reactions to different
feedback, including feedback comments about how well a task was accomplished and feedback focused on the effort of students producing the work. She found students were more motivated on subsequent tasks after they had received task-focused feedback. Her study showed that the reverse was true of those who received feedback that was ego-involved, praising students rather than the work.

Sadler (1989) presented two central ideas about feedback information. The first is that experienced teachers provide a range of feedback information including non-evaluative descriptions, evaluative comments identifying features that add to or detract from high quality, suggestions for alternative pathways to improvement and exemplifying feedback demonstrating an improved approach. The purpose of feedback as described here is to give students a clear sense of the state of the work as it is and to give them ways of improving that performance. The use of descriptive feedback is given priority by Davies (2003, p. 2), who found that “descriptive feedback supports learning because it reduces the uncertainty”.

Drawing on Ramaprasad (1983), Sadler’s second idea about feedback is that it should assist students to close the gap between their performance and their goal, with reference to criteria and standards. The extent to which teachers provide gap-closing information was called into question by Gipps et al.’s (2000) research into primary numeracy teachers’ classroom assessment practices, which found that participants predominantly provided “evaluative” feedback that signalled approval or disapproval associated with judgements about students’ efforts.

Empirical studies of the characteristics of teachers’ formative feedback in secondary schools are limited in number. Cowie (2005a) gathered interview data indicating that Years 7-10 Science students in New Zealand valued teachers explaining why their work was good, or otherwise, in ways that are consistent with the descriptions of formative feedback above. Conversely, Feng (2007) found that Senior English Second Language students from five secondary schools in New Zealand reported that in general teachers did not consistently provide specific comments that could offer guidance on how to improve their work. Although not from the secondary school sector, Straub’s study (1997, p. 91) provided evidence that first year College-level students from the United States “preferred comments that employed open questions, or included explanations that guided revision” rather than comments that “sought to control” their writing.
Professional learning textbooks produced to inform teacher practices in the classroom provide teachers with information about the nature and function of possible formative assessment activities. In these texts formative assessment information is focused on the types of feedback, factors in the use of feedback, and the characteristics of effective feedback (McMillan, 2011). Meiers (2005), writing of subject English, described formative information as encouraging and for the purpose of recognising achievement. Clarke (2005) described effective feedback as focused on the learning objective or success criteria of a particular task, with improvement suggestions aimed at closing the gap between “current performance and desired performance, specific to the learning objectives at hand” (p. 70).

**Feedback timing.** Two observations about the timing of formative feedback were evident in the literature: that it should occur frequently and throughout a unit of work; and that to be effective, it needs to be immediate. Bloom et al. (1971) described formative assessment as occurring frequently during a course of study, smaller segments of learning or instruction. It is understood, therefore, that feedback should occur while students are engaged in learning, and not after it has occurred; that it is timed to give advice that could lead to improvement (Shavelson, et al., 2004); and that it should be prompt and delivered in the short term (Black, 1998; Black et al., 2004; Shavelson, et al., 2004; Sliwka & Spencer, 2005). Peterson and Siadat’s (2009) qualitative research in post-secondary college classrooms in Chicago provided empirical evidence that frequent formative assessment with immediate feedback was a contributing factor in the improvement of student achievement on final, summative examinations. According to students’ accounts gathered in Scottish, lower-secondary Mathematics, Science and Social Studies classrooms, immediate formative feedback was most useful (Sliwka & Spencer, 2005). Delayed feedback meant that connections could not be made by students between their work and the learning that was occurring at that time.

**Feedback and marks.** It is generally accepted that marks and grading have limited utility for meeting formative assessment purposes associated with improvement. However, this is contested where marks are associated with the use of standards. The position is taken by some researchers that the diagnostic purpose of formative assessment cannot be met through marks and grading (Harlen & James, 1997), which are associated instead with
measurement, or as part of the official record of the student (Nitko, 1995). A second, related concern was raised by Black and Wiliam (2004) who used empirical evidence from secondary schools to indicate that improvement does not occur where grades alone or grades with feedback comments are used. Lipnevich and Smith (2009) reported a similar finding from their quantitative study of 464 first year psychology students in the United States that written, detailed feedback, specific to the student’s work was strongly related to improvement and that grades were shown to decrease the effect of the detailed feedback.

Roos and Hamilton (2005) took the position that students ignore the comments for the grade, and grades take on a meaning of their own. Belanger (2004) presented empirical evidence that in Years 8-12 subject English classrooms in a group of Canadian secondary schools the students reported that the grade on formal assessment pieces “controlled their response to any other feedback” (p. 43). In these studies, the grade competed with feedback responses that could provide students with detailed information about how to improve their performance on subsequent pieces of assessment.

Sadler (1989) voiced concerns that marks can be “too deeply coded…to lead to appropriate action, and the control loop cannot be closed” (p. 121), precluding their use for formative purposes. This was countered by Biggs (1998, p. 108), who asserted that a summative grade “based on a qualitatively derived hierarchy…based on the evolution of learning” can act as valuable feedback for the student in relation to their next piece of assessment. The given example of such a hierarchy was SOLO, the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome, but Biggs also included other (unnamed) frameworks that provide a “hierarchy of conceptions that can be used to form assessment targets” (Biggs, 1992, p. 7). Students must have a working knowledge of the hierarchy itself and it must be used in conjunction with other teacher feedback. This position has resonance for the discussion of defined criteria and standards to follow. In his more recent work Sadler (2010), writing of the higher education sector, problematised the use of “criteria-standards templates” and made the criticism that these can “inhibit the formation of a full-bodied concept of quality because they tend to prioritise specific qualities (criteria) rather than quality as a global property” (p. 536).

**Feedback modes.** Opinions in the research literature are divided on whether verbal or written feedback is the most effective mode. The term “modes” refers to the delivery method of the feedback; whether the feedback is delivered in writing, through digital or technological
means, or verbally. Black and Wiliam (2004) provided evidence that written comments are permanent and that this is desirable as students can respond to written comments in a thoughtful way over time. In relation to written feedback on homework or tests, two studies revealed that school students either chose not to engage with teacher’s written feedback (Zellermayer, 1989) or had difficulty understanding and taking action in response to feedback (Clarke, 2000).

Boulet, Simard, and Demelo’s work (1990) with secondary music students suggested that verbal feedback is easily accessible and “promotes significantly more learning than does individualized written feedback or no feedback” (p. 119). However, in examining Boulet’s findings Black and Wiliam (1998) proposed instead that the written and spoken feedback provided was sufficiently different that it was taken up in different ways by students. They acknowledged, though, that there was evidence immediate discussions provided greater interaction with teachers.

According to Marshall (2004), verbal feedback is a core formative assessment tool in English as teachers ask questions to “probe, refine or guide the understanding of pupils further still and so a kind of progression is ensured” (p. 112). Written feedback on student drafts of work in English should be “an engaged dialogue between the reader and the writer in an effort to improve communication” (Marshall & Wiliam, 2006, p. 15). Peterson and McClay (2010) gathered the accounts of Years 4 to 8 teachers of writing in Canada to examine their feedback and assessment practices. Based on the analysis of interview data, the researchers found that teachers and students placed great importance on talking to students about their writing. A Year 8 teacher found that “you never really know how much attention, if any, is given to remarks that might be written on a page unless you can converse with the student in a two-way conversation and give them an idea and see how they feel about the idea” (p. 93). This essential interaction will be discussed further in relation to roles and interactions of teachers and students.

The use of defined standards for formative purposes associated with improvement. Black and Wiliam (1998) provided a broad view of the reference points used for feedback:

… we propose, for the sake of simplicity, that the term feedback be used in its least restrictive sense, to refer to any information that is provided to the
performer of any action about that performance. This need not be from an external source, nor need there necessarily be some reference standard against which the performance is measured, let alone some method of comparing the two. (p. 53)

In this description, Black and Wiliam envisaged feedback as encompassing different types of feedback, sources of feedback, and reference standards. Sadler (1998) interpreted Black and Wiliam’s position outlined above to refer to an absence of reference level. He disagreed with the proposal that a performance could be evaluated in its own terms, indicating that while reference standards may not be explicit, the assessor nonetheless draws on a reference point in some “unarticulated or non-exemplified state” (p. 80). Sadler’s work emphasised defined standards in feedback, explored below.

Terms such as desired goals, success criteria, and assessment criteria are all used in the literature to indicate reference points against which formative assessment information is provided. “Success criteria” is a widely used term, originating from the Assessment for Learning research and most frequently used in relation to the measurement of students’ success in meeting learning intentions set by their teacher for a particular task or lesson (Blanchard, 2008). Assessment for Learning literature gives emphasis to the sharing of success criteria with students.

Earl (2003) advocated students’ active engagement with their own learning through a focus on self-assessment. She categorised this process as Assessment as Learning. Earl used both the terms “personal goals” and “external standards” as a means of describing general reference points, and noted that critical reference points are the student’s own prior work and “aspirations and targets for continued learning” (p. 25). As noted by Wyatt-Smith (2006), explicitly articulated standards were omitted from Earl’s description. It is important to note that the Assessment for Learning success criteria and Earl’s broad definition of reference points are different from Sadler’s view (1989) that students should develop evaluative expertise through the sharing of defined standards.

**Theorising of standards.** Sadler’s seminal paper (1989) on feedback theorised the nature and function of formative assessment and developed understandings about formative and summative assessment that are key to national and international research. As already discussed, Sadler viewed teacher feedback as having limited benefit by itself and noted that
improvement would not necessarily follow teachers’ “valid and reliable judgements about the quality of their work” (p. 119). Based on the work of Ramaprasad (1983), Sadler described three indispensable conditions for improvement. The student must simultaneously:

(a) possess a concept of the standard (or goal, or reference level) being aimed for;
(b) compare the actual (or current) level of performance with the standard; and
(c) engage in appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap [original emphasis]. (1989, p. 121)

Clear emphasis is given here to the notion of standards and the involvement of the learner in the improvement process. The onus is on the learner’s actions through their understanding of the standard, and judgement and regulation of “what they are doing during the doing of it” (p. 121), developing expertise in self-monitoring, even during the production of work. In order to do this, Sadler advocated that students would have to use standards to close the gap and maintained this could occur where students develop the ability to make “sound qualitative judgments” (Sadler, 1998, p. 82). This would enable students to see a progression in their own learning. For Sadler it was critical that “the guild knowledge of teachers should consist less in knowing how to evaluate student work and more in knowing ways to download evaluative knowledge to students [original emphasis]” (Sadler, 1989, p. 141). Guild knowledge is taken to refer to expert understandings that are held by practitioners in a particular area of expertise; in this case that reference is to understandings about standards and how to apply them, with such judgements often particular to different discipline areas. The handing down of this knowledge from teachers to students enables students to self-evaluate and self-monitor (1998).

It was Sadler’s view that students must understand criteria and standards’ contextualised meanings and implications in order to develop self-monitoring skills (Sadler, 1989, 2009a,b). This could be done through the use of exemplars of a range of designated levels of performance, used to specify the standards in conjunction with verbal descriptions of standards and their properties (Sadler, 1983, 1987, 1989, 2005, 2009b,c). Sadler (1989) also advocated the use of several exemplars of a single standard, “precisely to learn that there are different ways in which work of a particular quality can find expression” (p. 128).

In his later work focused on higher education, Sadler (2009c) developed his earlier work further to emphasise the need for students to “be inducted into evaluating quality, without necessarily being bound by tightly specific criteria”, mirroring the “way multi-
criterion judgments are typically made by experienced teachers” (p. 178). One way of doing this efficiently was for students to access the full range of different levels of quality through peer-assessment routines (2009b). Writing of the higher education sector, Sadler (2010) again made similar recommendations, based on his view that the use of rubrics and criteria and standards templates as the sole form of information about the possibilities of student performance could “inhibit the development of skill in identifying those criteria that are salient to particular appraisals” (p. 548).

The development of judgement outlined by Sadler was viewed by Marshall and Drummond (2006) as being at the heart of subject English learning and teaching. Marshall identified the acquisition of “guild knowledge” (Sadler, 1989, p.141) as a key process in subject English, with students’ knowledge of how to progress in this subject dependent upon their “being apprenticed into the same community of interpreters” as their teachers (Marshall, 2004, p. 101). They must, therefore, “engage with the question of what makes for quality in a piece of work—an issue which is difficult in English and hard for pupils to grasp” (Marshall & Drummond, p. 138). Hodgen and Marshall (2005, p. 161) identified English-specific concerns with criteria, that “a narrow, easily definable set of criteria will not illuminate what needs to be understood and developed by the pupils”, and that “what makes for quality in a piece of work cannot meaningfully be itemized in advance but can be recognized once it is complete” (p. 165). Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith’s study (2010) provided insights into English teachers’ stance that judgement in English cannot be readily quantified through their study of recently introduced formal moderation processes of teachers of primary and Years 8-10 secondary English, Mathematics and Science students in Queensland. Interview data also revealed that “collectively they voiced concern about ‘a danger of being too detailed’ in specifying criteria and standards”’ (p. 34). The teachers emphasised the development of knowledge of shared standards through practice.

Marshall’s description of progress in English (2004), discussed earlier, as developing towards an horizon as opposed to a clearly defined goal, relies heavily on the need for students to access further information to close the gap between the level of their current performance and their desired level. As part of their study of teacher feedback for improvement in six primary schools in New Zealand, Parr and Timperley observed (2010, p. 80) that this horizon mode of progression in English suggests “less specific outcomes and
multiple pathways” than a goal model of progression which is “known, quantifiable and reducible to a systematic teaching programme” (Marshall, 2004, p. 102). Progress to the horizon, therefore, includes the exploration and examination of criteria and “constant” engagement with exemplars of quality performance to develop what Wiliam (2002, p. 5) referred to as a “nose for quality”.

The position that students would benefit from working with standards, making judgements about the quality of work they are trying to produce and moderating one another’s judgements, also features in the work of Gibbs and Simpson (2004-5), which focussed on the higher education sector. Andrade’s (2001) empirically-based case study of Year 8 students from two middle schools found that simply handing out a rubric to students learning about writing would not result in any sustained improvement and that students should become more involved in the “design of rubrics by critiquing sample pieces of writing and by teaching students to self-assess their works in progress” (Andrade, Wang, Du, & Akawi, 2009, p. 287). Further studies offered evidence that students should be involved in the construction of assessment criteria and standards, whether simplified or co-constructed versions (Black, Harrison, Lee, & Wiliam, 2000).

Research studies are emerging that provide empirical evidence of connections between achievement, students’ self-assessment and explicit assessment criteria. Rust, Price, and O’Donovan (2003) indicated that students who participated in an intervention designed to develop their understanding of assessment criteria and the assessment process in designated assessed coursework, achieved significantly better results than non-participants. While this study is set in the higher education sector, it could be argued that the experiences of the first year undergraduate subjects are not dissimilar to those of senior secondary school students.

Kirton et al.’s investigation of Scottish primary and junior secondary schools involved in the AiFL Development Programme (2007), previously discussed, made similar claims about the relationship between criterial knowledge, peer-assessment, self-assessment and improvement. This research indicated that an internal schema of quality was developed where students used the criteria to assess and discuss a range of other students’ work against clear assessment criteria provided by their teacher. Kirton et al. reported that this “helped students to self-assess their own work more effectively” (p. 618).
Criticisms of defined criteria and standards. Several researchers have expressed a range of different concerns about the language used to frame criteria and standards, indicating that it is often complex and indeterminate. Broadfoot, McMeeking, James, Nuttall, and Stierer (1988) presented empirical evidence from a national evaluation of pilot schemes of Records of Achievements that secondary students thought self-assessment difficult, in part because the assessment criteria were unclear. Other researchers proposed that criteria need to be transparent to be used for improvement purposes (Frederiksen & Collins, 1989; Shepard, 2000). Sadler (1989, 2010) and Wiliam (2002) took the view that not all forms of understanding could be encapsulated in a set of pre-determined criteria with both researchers considering criteria not completely pre-determined, but emergent.

Some strong criticisms are made of the emphasis on improvement dependent upon defined criteria, including concerns with criteria compliance, a term introduced by Torrance (2007). Stobart (2008), Sadler (2007, 2010) and Torrance (2007) outlined concerns that the focus on explicitness could encourage “impoverished learning”, with a focus on criteria compliance and award achievement. Torrance, situated in post-secondary education and training in England, highlighted the possibility that “assessment procedures and practices may come completely to dominate the learning experience, and ‘criteria compliance’ come to replace ‘learning’” (p. 282).

The perceived mismatch of criteria with formative assessment and learning in the classroom was identified by Harlen and James (1997), who argued against strict criterion-referencing in formative assessment, finding that it is not necessary or helpful to conflate the functions and characteristics of formative assessment and summative assessment. Their understanding is that formative assessment deals with “small picture” ideas, or parts of the whole process of learning that should occur, whereas summative assessment deals with “big picture” ideas that demonstrate learning overall. In their opinion, formative feedback should usefully include “next steps” in learning information, and not be measured against level-based criteria (Harlen, 2006).

The utility of technology in formative assessment practices. Understandings about the utility of technology in formative assessment are presented in research studies focusing on the possible use of on-line formative assessment tools and activities and “new” formulations of criteria and standards. Several studies set in the higher education sector
present empirical evidence of on-line formative assessment tools extending the possibilities for improvement through development of self- and peer-assessment opportunities (Buchanan, 2000; Jenkins, 2004; Peat & Franklin, 2002; Webb, 2010). In a study of nursing/midwifery students, Thalurri (2007) found that students’ performances improved significantly when they used a continuous on-line self-assessment tool. Other research reports advantages of on-line formative assessment tools including the flexibility of learning opportunities and immediacy of feedback (Jenkins, 2004). Webb’s study (2010) of first year education students described on-line formative assessment tools as mediating artefacts that assist students to undertake self- and peer-assessment. The participants reported that the multiple feedback opportunities afforded through this type of assessment were valuable. Prain (2003, p. 9) described technology as “enhancing the pattern and purposes of interactions between teachers and students, when contrasted with face-to-face discussions”. He outlined findings from a case study of on-line discussions used in Senior English classrooms in Victoria, Australia, presenting the teacher participants’ claims that such discussions “increased student exposure to, and awareness of, diversity and quality in textual analysis” (p. 14), processes that have been discussed elsewhere as essential in English classrooms.

Technology can also be used to provide opportunities for formative assessment social interactions. Finger and Jamieson-Proctor (2009) described the advantages of using Web 2.0 technologies including opportunities for peer review, group collaboration and teacher and student interaction to open up pathways for formative assessment. Shirley (2009) gathered interview and observation data in Mathematics and Science secondary school classrooms to argue that the use of interactive classroom technologies, or audience response systems, allow more interactivity between students and the teacher. The evidence was explicit to the teacher and the students, and teachers could gather immediate formative data, in the form of individual as well as aggregate responses from the class to question prompts, to adjust their teaching.

In terms of meeting both formative and summative assessment requirements, Finger and Jamieson-Proctor (2009) proposed the use of web-based ePortfolios. Described as offering more flexibility and access options to students and their audiences, ePortfolios could provide increasing opportunities for multiple interactions and feedback points and allow for on-going formative interactions. Webb’s (2010) study, outlined above, conducted research in
a subject focused on ICT. She identified this as a limitation of the study and anticipated the study’s positive findings about students’ use of new technologies may not be replicated in other discipline areas if technology is not part of the assessed curriculum. This added complexity would need to be considered in terms of teachers’ take-up and use of ePortfolios.

One study called for a reconceptualising of assessment criteria and suggested that technology has consequences for the pre-specification of criteria and standards. Focused on the introduction of technology to subject English for secondary students in Years 8, 10 and 12, Kimber and Wyatt-Smith (2009) recommended the negotiation of criteria between teachers and students as part of their stated research quest to recognise, talk about and value signs of quality learning in student-created multimodal texts. They cited Sadler’s position that learners can develop self-monitoring expertise over time, by engaging with specific criteria and evidence in their own work, as well as the work of others, but emphasised that research had not yet explored how students “might think about and use new technologies” with an improvement agenda (p. 12). Their findings demonstrate that traditional ideas about criteria and standards in assessment do not have currency in today’s digital world, and that “current criteria and standards show little guarantee of longevity in future schooling scenarios” (p. 12). They observe “new” formulations of criteria and standards that account for the affordances of the new technologies will be necessary. This has repercussions for the work that teachers do with criteria and standards for formative purposes in an increasingly technological environment.

**Thematic Thread Three: Roles and Interactions**

The third thematic thread identified in this review of formative assessment literature is the centrality of roles and interactions between the participants with a focus on assessment as social practice. Four key messages pertaining to formative assessment as social practice emerge. First, the teacher has the central role in formative assessment, and mediates and enables student improvement through the provision of feedback and development of students’ learning and hence, increasing independence from the teacher as the sole source of evaluative feedback. The formative role of the teacher in producing assessment items for summative purposes is contested. A second key message is that weight is also given to the role of the student in self-evaluation, with such skills enabled by the teacher. Divergent attitudes exist around the extent to which students act as agents in their own improvement in
this way, independently of teachers. Priority is given to student self-assessment and peer-assessment as essential to improvement.

The third key message is that formative assessment provides for individuals’ needs but this is contingent upon interactions occurring between individual students and teachers. The fourth key message is that questions are raised about whether formative assessment is interactionally accomplished as teachers respond to student needs, or whether teachers are more responsive to system and school requirements.

**The central role of the teacher.** A defining factor in assessment is the “division of responsibility in teaching and learning” (Rowntree, 1987, p. 10). The literature presents different ways of thinking about this division in terms of the roles of teachers and students and how formative assessment is enacted by both groups, separately and/or in combination. In 1998, Torrance and Pryor reported that the roles of teachers and students are a source of “considerable disagreement” between researchers. They described a continuum of opinions in the literature ranging from formative assessment as controlled by the teacher to those who believe it should be “essentially focused on the pupil experience” (p. 8). While there are points of disagreement in the literature surveyed here, there are also general understandings that could be described as common. In the main, the literature features formative classroom interactions that involve both teachers and students (Shepard, 2000), but with different positions taken on the roles of each.

The teacher is central to the formative assessment process, but has an enabling role through feedback and the induction of students into ways to improve independently of the teacher. As identified in the discussion of feedback, the role of the teacher to provide feedback is considered crucial to improvement. Brookhart (2001) identified the balance of writing about formative assessment as focusing on the role of the teacher and not the student, linking this to the role of teachers in planning and administering classroom assessments. There is strong support for the notion that teacher feedback should make available opportunities for students to develop their learning (Black & Wiliam, 2003; Gipps & Stobart, 2003; Harlen, 2005; Sadler, 1989). However, writings that have been seen to prioritise the role of the teacher, limiting the involvement of the student in the process, have attracted criticism. Torrance and Pryor (1998) identified the writings of Harlen and James (1997) and Tunstall and Gipps (1996) as emphasising the role of the teacher in formative assessment.
The OECD research (2005a) was similarly criticised by Sebba (2006) for defining formative assessment as used to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately, as opposed to the ARG definition that put a “greater emphasis on the use to be made by learners of the assessment information” (p. 188).

According to Carless (2007), the teacher is the “key mediator in enhancing student learning” (p. 172). Black and Wiliam (1998) described two ways in which teachers mediate. First, teachers build students’ capacity to assess themselves and assess each other, so that they can plan and carry out any gap-closing measures that are necessary. Second, teachers control the learning situation, producing “the stimulus information and directing the activity which follows” as students respond to their feedback, (p. 25). These actions involve mediation between students, their work, their peers, and understandings about quality. This mediation relates to the agency of the student. In subject English, specifically, the aim of formative assessment is to “enable pupils to become independent learners” (Marshall & Wiliam, 2006, p. 4). It is proposed that this occurs through interactions with peers and teachers, with Marshall and Wiliam (2006) describing the process as one of scaffolding “through which the learner develops the capabilities him/herself” (p. 4). Empirical evidence of English students’ attitudes to this process is offered later in the discussion of students’ roles as assessors.

Sadler (1989) explicitly advocated the transition from dependence on teacher feedback to self-monitoring. He described this as a goal in itself, common to many “instructional systems”. As previously discussed, the role of the teacher is pivotal, as is the use of explicit standards to “download” evaluative expertise. Moreover, students must avail themselves of all of the opportunities to build “guild knowledge” of explicit standards in the way described and use this to examine and improve their own work.

Earl (2003) took up the issue of participant roles in her work where she separated out three assessment purposes: of learning, for learning, and as learning. Assessment of learning has a summative function, while the difference between assessment for learning, and as learning is characterised by the roles the teachers and students take up in particular formative assessment situations. Earl proposed that assessment for learning, as previously discussed, is interactive, occurs as learning is occurring (as opposed to at the end), and is part of the role of the teacher. Assessment as learning, alternatively, extends the formative
assessment role and places the student as central to assessment. This is discussed further in relation to student self-assessment.

**The formative role of the teacher in summative assessment production.** Belanger (2004) identified the priority given to providing written feedback on students’ work in the teaching of writing in subject English. While Belanger indicated emphasis is given to formative processes in English in Canadian secondary schools, his view was that:

… the real currency of our transactions with our students about writing at the secondary and post-secondary levels still appears to be the summative assessment of a single piece of writing – or a series of single pieces of writing – in which we attempt to serve the dual roles of mentor and judge, on the one hand suggesting ways in which students can improve their writing and on the other rendering a final judgement of the value of the piece. (p. 41)

This description of the practices of English teachers includes dual purposes, both formative and summative, that feature in the teaching of writing. While teachers work specifically with students to improve their skills in subject English through the receipt of teacher feedback, emphasis is given to the judgement of the worth of the piece.

The formative role of the teacher in summative assessment production is influenced by the summative assessment system itself. The teacher’s help is withheld during standardised testing. In contrast, during dynamic assessment the teacher and student “collaborate to produce the best performance of which the pupil is capable” and “giving help, in order to obtain best performance, is the rule in this model” (Gipps, 1999, pp. 375-6). Support is withheld at some point, at which time the performance is evaluated, with the aim of obtaining the best performance, rather than the typical performance elicited in standardised tests where help is withheld (Gipps, 2002).

A key point was made by Sadler (1989, p. 142) that “any work which is to form the basis for a course grade is normally expected, of course, to be produced by the student without aid from the teacher”, which points to the notion of a clear boundary between formative assessment and summative assessment data. In this view, assessment items to be marked for reporting are not to be co-produced by teachers and students. Sadler’s perspective was challenged by Crooks (2001) who held that formative assessment is part of work-in-progress, with the final, ultimately summative, version being informed by that formative
assessment. As Stobart (2006) noted, this is obvious where the assessment is a classroom assignment.

The role of summative assessment feedback in the formative process is of interest in this study situated in a system that advocates assessment for dual purposes. Belanger (2004) presented empirical evidence in the form of Year 8-12 Canadian students’ accounts of their use of teacher feedback comments from graded, summative assessment subject English items. The interview data revealed that half of the 119 students in the study claimed they kept teacher feedback on completed work, intending to use it to improve subsequent assessment pieces. However, the investigation revealed that only two of the students had read through previous assignments to inform the assignment they were currently working on at that time. While this gives some indication of students’ use of feedback, the extent to which this is the case generally across assessment systems is not known.

**Student roles and agency in formative assessment.** The role of the student in formative assessment has become increasingly prominent in formative assessment research over the last three decades (Black et al., 2004; Brookhart, 2007; Earl, 2003; Kirton et al., 2007; Rust et al., 2003; Sadler, 1983, 1986a,b,c,d,e, 1989, 1998, 2005, 2010; Stiggins, 2005). Black and Wiliam’s (1998) definition of formative assessment, discussed previously, gave equal emphasis to the role of student and teacher. In relation to subject English Marshall (2007) foregrounded student engagement in the formative assessment process and recognised the strong emphasis on the student’s role in learning and improvement as particularly pertinent in English and humanities subjects.

The literature reveals that students have agency in formative assessment to act in two ways: to take up teacher feedback to make improvements; and to peer- and self-assess to improve. There is a strong message that feedback is formative only when it is used to take improvement action (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2001, 2005; Brookhart, 2001; Harlen & James, 1997; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; McDonald & Boud, 2003; Roos & Hamilton, 2005; Sadler, 1989, 2010). Black and Wiliam (1998), moreover, described this as a conditional feature of formative assessment. While Belangar et al. (2004) provided some evidence from Year 8 to 12 English classrooms in secondary schools of students’ use of teachers’ feedback on summative assessment for on-going formative purposes, as discussed above, the extent to which students consistently use teacher feedback to adjust and improve their work was not
clearly shown. Stobart (2006) addressed this issue through his distinction between the intention and the function of teacher feedback. While feedback can be intended to provide formative information, it may not function in this way if the learner fails to act on the feedback to improve their work.

**Students’ roles as assessors in self-assessment and peer-assessment.** Priority is given to student self-assessment for improvement purposes and the assumption that students will self-assess to improve. Marshall and Drummond (2006) specifically described Assessment for Learning practices as “built on an underlying pedagogic principle that foregrounds the promotion of pupil autonomy” (p. 133–4). It was understood that Assessment for Learning practices “might enable pupils to become independent learners”. It was also seen as an essential aspect of subject English pedagogy (Marshall, 2007). van Kraayenoord (1994) identified self-assessment as essential in motivating and engaging students in literacy learning, and as “one aspect of the instruction and assessment practices which emerge from the valued dimensions of literacy learning” (p. 54). Further, Johnston and Costello (2005) saw self-assessment as a necessary, but complex process in literacy development. They identified important task factors that would affect the development of self-assessment: “the nature and difficulty of the task, its personal and external relevance, the articulation of task features, and performance criteria” (p. 259).

For other researchers, self-assessment is linked closely to feedback. Clark (2010) described several conditions of formative feedback, including the need for the student to be “positioned as the agent improving and initiating their own learning” (p. 344). As discussed earlier, Davies (2003) prioritised the use of descriptive feedback for improvement in literacy. She highlighted the role of descriptive feedback in self-assessment, as students “receive descriptive feedback when they compare their work to models, posted samples or detailed criteria” (p. 2). As also discussed earlier, Earl (2003) distinguished between Assessment for learning, and Assessment as learning, advising that it was in the latter that students engaged in contributing to the assessment and learning process, and were charged with being the connector between them. Earl took a similar position to Davies, outlining the need for students to self-assess and use feedback to “make adjustments, adaptations, and even major changes in what they understand” (p. 25).
However, empirical evidence of self-assessment in classrooms is not strong. Hawe, Dixon and Watson (2008) found that in a sample of New Zealand primary schools, despite a system focus on the use of quality feedback and the involvement of students in their own learning, these understandings were not in evidence in written language classes. Instead, “opportunities for students to become ‘insiders’ (Sadler, 1989) in the feedback process and to exert agency in their learning, were the exception rather than the rule” (p. 56).

Black and Wiliam (1998) cited empirical evidence (Daws & Singh, 1996, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 1998) drawn from studies conducted in Norway and the United Kingdom that self-assessment was not common, “even amongst those teachers who took assessment seriously” (p. 25). In studies that do report the use of self-assessment this occurs when emphasis is given to developing those skills (Black & Wiliam, 2006; Hawk & Hill, 2001; McDonald & Boud, 2003). Brookhart (2001) and McDonald and Boud (2003) conducted studies in secondary classrooms. Brookhart’s empirical evidence from a study of Year 11 English and Anatomy students indicated that “successful” students see assessment as a process, part of which is the need to develop self-monitoring skills. McDonald and Boud’s (2003) research employed quantitative methodologies to show that examination scores of final year students in a West Indies’ secondary school were improved when a systematic approach was taken to the use of self-assessment. The study focused on 10 secondary schools, with 256 teachers trained to teach students to use self-assessment. The results were compared with those of a control group who did not receive the training. The researchers concluded the gains were the result of training of both students and teachers and that “self-assessment training can be introduced into high schools in such a way that students can benefit directly from the development of teachers in this area” (p. 219).

Other studies have featured classroom interventions in senior secondary classes, such as Black and Harrison’s research (2001), but did not exclusively focus on them. A study by Kirton et al. (2007) intervened to systematically and purposefully develop students’ self-assessment and peer-assessment skills across discipline areas in primary and junior secondary schools. Both of these studies made claims of gains for students. Sadler’s position (1989) that the deliberate development of evaluative expertise allows students to self-monitor and improve provided another theoretical position on student agency. As this was discussed in detail earlier, it has not been repeated here.
Peer-assessment is also identified as an important part of the improvement process; Black et al. (2003) and Wiliam (2002) declared peer-assessment an important complement to self-assessment and possibly a pre-requisite. Particularly in relation to the complex matter of recognising quality writing in subject English, Wiliam’s view (2002) was that students were very good at finding mistakes in each other’s work. If the teacher makes “the peer marking sufficiently focused, it can help students see where they have gone wrong themselves, or why when they write as they do it is hard for others to follow” (p. 51).

Diab’s study (2011) presented empirical evidence of the comparative effectiveness of peer-editing and self-editing and improvement of the writing of first year students of English at an American university in Lebanon. While both strategies brought about improvement through revision, the results showed that students who participated in strategies focused on language learning with their peers were more actively engaged in the writing process than those who self-edited. Sadler (2010, p. 541), writing of the higher education sector, provided a similar view, identifying the potential of peer-assessments to “provide learners with an appraisal experience that is similar to the teacher’s”. The value of this would derive from its use in providing students “with practical experience and a body of conceptual knowledge” instrumental to their successful self-assessment, as well as their use of teacher feedback for improvement purposes. Allal (2010) proposed a close link between self-assessment and classroom processes in her discussion of the regulation of learning, discussed earlier, describing the “reciprocal, or even dialectical, relations between student self-regulation and the sources of regulation in the learning environment (structure of the tasks, teacher interventions, peer interactions, and assessment tools)” (p. 349). Shulha and Wilson (2010) similarly highlighted the development of a range of classroom practices that included self- and peer-assessment, portfolio development, student-led conferencing, and frequent teacher feedback. Such practices were observed to encourage growth and learning in two Canadian classrooms.

**Formative assessment practices focusing on individuals.** Broadfoot’s more recent work (2009, p. viii) identified the “increased recognition of the importance of diversity and subjectivity”, but generally the focus in the research literature on diversity in classrooms does not go beyond the discussion of meeting individual needs. The formative assessment literature gives great weight to students as individuals or in small groups and foregrounds the
needs and progress of all students (ARG, 2002a; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen & James, 1997). For example, in Pollard’s (1990) social-constructivist model of teaching and learning applied to primary schools, the student was often spoken about in the singular and teachers were described as acting with “accurate knowledge of each child’s needs” (p. 251). It is recognised that emphasis is given to the provision of individual feedback to all students in subject English (Black & Wiliam, 2006). Black and Wiliam (2006) reasoned that in English, and particularly pertinent to teaching writing, the focus in teaching and learning is not on explicit subject matter to “deliver’, except in the case of those teachers who focus only on the mechanics of grammar, spelling and punctuation” (p. 85). They described teachers of subject English as “naturally more accustomed” to interacting with all students to provide individual feedback. Predominantly, therefore, feedback is interactive and responsive to individual needs.

The emphasis on the student as individual and the teacher as making provision for individual learning needs in the classroom has repercussions for the treatment of diverse learners in the classroom. It is generally accepted that those tenets of good formative assessment practice already discussed in this chapter can meet the needs of diverse learners. Gipps and Stobart (2009) indicated that students from a range of backgrounds have access to learning when they are able to play an active role, and learn to self-assess and self-evaluate. Black and Wiliam’s (1998) review found that formative assessment particularly helped low-achieving students, including students with learning disabilities, to a greater extent than it assisted other students (Black & Wiliam, 2004). Research studies (McCurdy & Shapiro, 1992, as cited in Boston, 2002; Sawyer, Graham, & Harris, 1992, as cited in Boston, 2002) showed that improvements through self-assessment strategies can also occur for students with learning disabilities.

Research studies indicate that not all formative assessment can occur in interactions between individuals and the teacher in a whole-class setting and the access of all students to formative assessment is uncertain. Carless (2007) addressed the use of formative assessment processes in environments where teachers are dealing with large classes and under the pressure of time. Using empirical data from Cowie and Bell’s (1999) developmental and observational study of formative assessment in 10 secondary school Science classes, Carless found that teachers used two types of formative assessment. Planned, diagnostic formative
assessment pieces were most often directed towards the class to gather information to inform the next stage of learning. Interactive, unplanned assessment occurred between teachers and individuals or small groups, with a particular focus on the individual learner.

Carless (2007) suggested that the provision of formative assessment opportunities may not be an equitable practice in classrooms, allowing opportunities for some students that others may not receive. While planned formative assessment could make available “identical treatment” for students, Carless anticipated this may not occur in interactive formative assessment. There was no empirical evidence made available in Cowie and Bell’s (1999) study as to whether all students in the study were involved in interactive formative assessment. Crooks (2004) also suggested that the amount of assistance afforded individuals in internal or school-based assessment could be different, with the potential for teachers to give more help to some students.

**Responsiveness to individual needs or system/school requirements.** The ways that teachers understand the work that they are required to do is related to their work cultures, shaped by the system and school site in which they work. The extent to which formative assessment is interactionally accomplished in response to students’ needs, or whether what students do is highly-regulated practice subject to system and school requirements, has not been the subject of sustained research to date. As discussed previously, little empirical evidence exists that teachers are able to adjust their teaching and learning in response to student needs. Of interest is whether they respond, instead, to other influences. Pryor and Crossouard’s (2007) socio-cultural framework of formative assessment emphasised formative assessment as a discursive social practice. Using discourse analysis, these writers identified that “legitimate knowledge is framed by institutional discourses and summative assessment demands” (p. 1). Teachers’ decisions are made with reference to their understanding of their role within the particular assessment system and educational institution in which they operate.

**Formative assessment and parents.** As previously mentioned, Broadfoot (1996) described assessment as involving groups of actors, from within and outside of the school, including parents. Generally, the literature has identified parents’ focus on summative assessment, including grading and reporting (Black, 1998; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen,
but there is not clear agreement in the literature on the role for parents in the enactment of formative assessment. The position is taken by some researchers that a role exists. Some empirical evidence from a case study of a Canadian teacher of Business in a Canadian secondary school showed that when the teacher deliberately involved parents in student assessment projects, the parents enthusiastically took up roles that involved supporting students’ learning at home (Shulha & Wilson, 2010).

Hutchinson and Young (2011) provided an insight into the role of parents in AiFL, the Scottish national assessment programme, discussed earlier. An “Open Space” event was used to discover parents’ expectations for reporting in primary and secondary schooling. This consultation revealed that parents wanted to know what their children were learning and their strengths and needs, in order to “support them in partnership with the school” (p. 66). Clark (2010) made broad connections between formative assessment and parents in the last of eight key principles underpinning formative assessment: “to engage parents and carers in the learning process” (p. 345). However, Clark’s key principles were not focused on the secondary school setting.

The lack of strong empirical evidence of the role of parents in formative assessment in secondary schooling could be viewed in light of Hill and Tyson’s finding (2009) that despite an emphasis on parental involvement in the classroom in early childhood and primary schooling, by the time students reach secondary school parents are less confident in assisting their children with homework, or cognitive development. Secondary school structures do not actively support parental involvement in the same way as in primary school. Townsend (1997) compared primary and secondary school communities in Australia and the United States, focusing on perceptions of members of school communities about factors associated with school effectiveness. The study did not provide any clear findings on the role of parents in formative assessment, but it could be inferred from the absence of such a discussion that parents do not measure school effectiveness by their own role in their student’s learning.

**The Queensland System and the Literature: Warrant for the Study**

The following section brings forward key messages presented in the review of formative assessment literature, organised under the three thematic threads identified as part of the analysis process:

(1) Purposes;
(2) Practices;
(3) Roles and interactions.

The chapter presents different accounts of formative assessment made through the literature. The discussion also reflects on main understandings about the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland system outlined in Chapter 2, drawn from its examination of the official accounts of the purpose and practice of formative assessment and the roles and interactions of participants in this system. In addition, accounts of the system by Queensland academics and from researchers working internally and externally to the system will be presented. This discussion commences with consideration of the available empirical evidence of the system in action but indicates that there is no sustained examination of the use of formative assessment in the high-stakes environment of Year 12 English. This synthesis of different understandings of formative assessment provides the warrant for this study of teachers’ accounts of the nature and function of their formative assessment practices in Year 12 English classrooms in Queensland.

**Empirical evidence.** Much of the formative assessment research discussed in this review draws from assessment settings that include external testing, and this has a strong bearing on the understanding of formative assessment made available in the literature. Teachers have priorities related to externally-controlled, summative assessment tasks in this environment. As outlined in Chapter 1, Queensland’s school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment system provides a different and unique set of circumstances for teachers’ assessment practices. The literature provides insights from other assessment systems that are useful for understanding formative assessment in general, and with regard to specifics related to purposes, practices and roles and interactions. Further, examination of the practices in the system and particular schools sheds further light on the variables that impact on teachers’ expected practices.

As mentioned earlier, only limited research has been conducted that provides empirical evidence of the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced system in practice in Senior Schooling in Queensland. Butler observed in 1995 that the research base of the Queensland criteria-referenced assessment system was not strong, but at that time was being accumulated (Viviani, 1990). He noted that criteria-referenced assessment was based
“not on researched procedures but on conceptualisations of the scheme” (in the form of the Discussion Papers, referred to in Chapter 2) and “the personal practical knowledge of teachers who together have described and shared the meaning of the standards and criteria” (p. 136).

Much has been written about the Queensland system, but this writing is restricted to two general types (Gunn, 2007, cited in Matters & Wyatt-Smith, 2008; Matters, 2006a). The first is writing produced by Queensland academics, including Cumming and Maxwell (2004), Maxwell (1995, 2004), and Matters and Wyatt-Smith (2008). This includes the original Discussion Papers written by Queensland academics as part of the Assessment Unit (Beasley, Findlay, McMeniman, Sadler, 1986-1988) and papers written by “key figures” in the system’s implementation, including Pitman (1991), Pitman and Allen (2000), and Dudley and Luxton (2008). Beasley (2004) also provided insights into teachers’ and students’ accounts of Syllabus design changes, involving major adjustments to assessment in Senior Science education in Queensland schools.

The second type includes scholarly articles that describe the Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced system as an exemplar, written by researchers from outside of the system (Elwood, 2006; Gipps & Stobart, 2003; Harlen, 2005, 2006; Myford, 1999; Sebba, 2006; Shavelson et al., 2004). Relevant insights about formative assessment made available through these have been raised through the discussion in this chapter, and in the section to follow that provides the warrant for this study.

Available empirical evidence of teachers’ formative assessment practices in Senior English in Queensland and/or the use of assessment criteria and standards is restricted to the unpublished doctoral study of Smith (1995), and related publications. Further to this, observations of evaluative talk in English and Marine Studies classrooms (Wyatt-Smith, 2001) provided insights into formative assessment in Year 12 classrooms. Accounts by Year 12 Health and Physical Education teachers of their interpretation of assessment criteria and standards (Hay & Macdonald, 2008) provided insights into what value teachers attribute to the published assessment criteria and standards in Queensland. As indicated in Chapter 1, to date there are no large-scale, longitudinal studies of formative assessment in practice in Queensland, or ones that apply the limited theorising of the Queensland system that has occurred to date in practice. A representative of the QSA was unable to cite any formal
studies of Senior English in Queensland. Instead, she considered SWPs to be “statements of intent” of practice from schools. Evidence of practice, therefore, is the student work submitted for moderation processes. Monitoring folios presented at District Review Panel meetings in February of each year, and containing students’ Year 11 work, are recognised as formative, while verification folios presented in October of each year and containing the majority of the work to be completed in Year 12, are recognised as summative (anonymous source at QSA, personal communication, 2011).

The review of literature reveals a gap in empirical evidence based specifically on teacher accounts of their formative assessment practices in the Senior Schooling Queensland system generally and particularly in relation to Senior English. English teachers’ accounts of their formative assessment practices are largely restricted to research conducted in junior secondary classrooms. An example of this is Marshall and Drummond’s (2006) insights into the practices and understandings of a small number of United Kingdom Years 8-10 English teachers. Empirical evidence of teacher formative assessment practices generally in Queensland secondary schools is available in the case reports of formative practices in Years 8-10 Key Learning Areas, including English, in two schools by Sebba and Maxwell (2005, p. 192). The observation and description of classroom practices provides an insight into the links between teachers’ practices and the formative assessment purposes of those practices. The teachers’ accounts of their practices provide data on high-stakes, Year 12 English classrooms with which this study is concerned. The following three sections synthesise the key messages of the literature review with understandings about formative assessment gleaned from the review of policy in Chapter 2.

**Implications of thematic thread one for this study: formative assessment purposes.** A key message of the literature reviewed in this chapter is that formative assessment is most strongly associated with improvement purposes, with significant gains claimed in many studies associated with interventions or developed classroom practices. The Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Senior Schooling system presents a distinct setting against which to consider these claims. The Queensland system has included an explicitly stated focus on formative assessment since the early 1980s, and assessment for formative purposes and assessment for summative purposes are foregrounded and assumed to be routine aspects of teacher practice.
A second key message of the literature is that formative assessment purposes are established by the assessment system context. The literature concerns itself with the influence of system expectations of summative assessment in the high-stakes end of secondary schooling environment. In the Queensland Senior Schooling system, school-based summative assessment contributes to certification that has implications for students’ post school futures and is regulated by the statutory Authority. Teachers’ roles, therefore, include making available both formative assessment and summative assessment opportunities, with full responsibility for the design, construction and execution of both. Of interest in relation to purpose is the description of progress towards an horizon in subject English (Marshall, 2004) and what this means in relation to teachers’ and students’ use of defined criteria and standards and students’ folios, as outlined in Chapter 2.

In the Queensland system, formative assessment feedback is described as having a role in judgements made by teachers about student achievement levels and progress, while at the same time summative assessment feedback contributes to improved learning (Maxwell, 2004). The contestations in the literature surrounding the clear distinction between the purposes to which each assessment type is put highlights the need to consider whether summative assessment and formative assessment serve clearly demarcated, but dual purposes, and whether they meet complementary or competing demands. Research shows that in assessment systems that prioritise external testing, formative assessment tends to serve summative assessment purposes (Black et al., 2003; Harlen, 2005; OECD, 2005a). Due to the lack of empirical evidence of formative assessment in Year 12 English classrooms in Queensland, the influence of the high-stakes nature of summative assessment on teachers’ classroom formative assessment practices is unknown. In particular, in this study consideration will be given to the Queensland system routine of profiling students’ folio records, intended to be used for formative purposes associated with improvement as well as summative moderation procedures. While these understandings are well-established, the extent to which Queensland teachers use students’ summative assessment for further formative purposes is considered in the case reports. It is also worth noting that while teacher understanding and use of formative assessment purposes in Year 12 is taken as read in this system, the Department of Education and Training and Employment in Queensland has given
great emphasis to capacity-building in assessment at the middle schooling level, with middle schooling initiatives featuring on its website (DETA, 2011).

A third key message about formative assessment purposes is that there is no single definition of what counts as evidence of improvement in the literature, with references to both learning improvement and the improvement of achievement measured in terms of grades. This uncertainty has resonance for this study. As outlined in Chapter 2, the main understanding of policy statements about formative assessment in Year 12 is that formative assessment has a strong improvement function. In this final Senior Schooling year emphasis is on the collection of information to be used for certification and reporting purposes associated with exit from the course and this is the focus of moderation and verification. It is also the focus of teacher planning of assessment items to contribute to certification on exit from the course, as outlined in the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b). When considering assessment in Senior Science courses in Queensland, Matters (2006a, p. 32) found that effective assessment “encompasses the dual and related goals of assessment of learning and assessment for learning”, and Queensland teachers set assessment tasks that fulfil these dual purposes. The key question becomes, therefore, what constitutes improvement evidence in this setting where assessment purposes are considered to be complementary, but where there is a clear focus on meeting summative assessment purposes. This establishes the need to consider how Senior English teachers identify improvement in the Queensland system.

The review of literature identified a fourth key message, that teachers should adjust teaching and learning activities in response to formative assessment information, but the evidence presented in the research is that this is not a common practice. The resonance for this study draws from this contestation, as well as the understanding that in subject English the direction of a lesson is determined by the interactions that take place between the teacher and students (Hodgen & Marshall, 2005; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Moni et al., 2003). Further to this, in the Queensland Senior Schooling system, Senior English teachers attend to formative assessment while meeting high-stakes summative Year 12 assessment requirements, which are part of an approval process that requires them to be prepared and pre-planned. The extent to which teachers are therefore able to adjust teaching and learning activities in response to formative assessment information is of interest in this study.
Implications of thematic thread two for this study: formative assessment practices. The first key message in relation to formative assessment practices is that there is a close association between pedagogy and formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Carless, 2007; Shepard, 2005). Writers in the field of formative assessment, especially in relation to feedback, point to practices that are well-recognised to characterise effective classroom pedagogy. Table 1, which outlines the specific formative assessment practices drawn from the literature, framed by the writing of Black et al. (2004) and Wiliam (2005), provides a means to consider teachers’ accounts of their practices in Queensland against this framing of what is given value in the literature. This raises the issue of the distinction between formative assessment and pedagogy and whether they are fundamentally intertwined and intrinsic to each other.

Studies of assessment systems in other nations, such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Black, 2001; Hume & Coll, 2009), indicate that the high-stakes qualifications that combine school-based and external testing in these settings strongly influence what is taught and how, because teachers want to “secure” good results for their students. The influence of high-stakes requirements on teachers’ formative assessment practices, and the extent to which teachers are influenced in the what and how of their teaching by summative assessment, is of interest in this study. An area of especial interest for this study is the part that formative assessment feedback plays in a system where teachers have a role in the design and implementation of assessment for high-stakes summative purposes, and where formative assessment is associated with effective planning. The influence of this role on the way that pedagogy, formative assessment and summative assessment function in classrooms has not been previously examined.

The formative strategies presented in the literature are broad, with emphasis given to informal formative interactions such as questioning, discussions and conversations, and through peer- and self-assessment. Clear emphasis is given to discussions as a formative assessment process that is characteristic of subject English (Applebee et al., 2003; Marshall, 2007; Sawyer et al., 2000), with the understanding that such interactions determine the direction of the teaching. As outlined in Chapter 2, three assessment techniques are described in the Syllabus as useful in both formative and summative assessment to “provide students with valuable information about their language use” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 24): consultations,
observations and focused textual analysis. Marshall and Wiliam proposed (2006) that observations are a useful part of discussions and conversations, as students and teachers interact around text production.

Sadler (1986e) took the view that observations could be used as part of the formal judgements made about student achievement in the Senior years of schooling in Queensland but raised concerns about the mismatch between impressions of what students are doing and the actual quality of their achievements for summative purposes, the lack of sustained empirical research as evidence, and the element of chance involved in gathering informal assessment data. However, observations are less commonly reported in summative assessment in Senior Schooling, except where judgements of performance involve teacher observations. As previously discussed, the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 24) made clear that “focused textual analysis contributes to the requirements for verification”. “Affective” considerations, described as objectives of the course and including the development of positive attitudes in relation to texts, language and literate practices are excluded from formal assessment.

Focused textual analysis provides opportunities for written and spoken feedback on drafts of summative assessment pieces. Senior English summative assessment is focused on the collection of tasks for certification and reporting. No sustained empirical evidence has previously been gathered of both informal and formal assessment processes in Queensland, and the part played by informally-gathered assessment data in high-stakes certification and reporting.

The second key message is that great weight is given in the literature to feedback as a central part of the formative assessment process. In addition, the focus is on feedback from the teacher to the student as central to the learning and improvement process. This is a pivotal point in the Queensland system that legitimises the role of teachers in providing feedback for improvement purposes during the production of assessment items that are to be counted for summative assessment purposes associated with certification. One of the main understandings about formative assessment highlighted in Chapter 2 is that teachers have a central role in the provision of formative feedback. This is possible for all but one of the tasks, which is presented under examination conditions, as a response to an unseen question. The balance of tasks are written assignments and spoken/signed presentations, which can
attract teacher formative feedback on, and thus direct input in, summative assessment drafts. Rather than being restricted to students’ receipt of feedback from the teacher, Sadler (1989) described a broader purpose for feedback, to assist students to develop skills in assessing themselves.

While published research draws on classroom observations of formative assessment practices including feedback in junior secondary, or middle-schooling classrooms across the Key Learning Areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Languages other than English, Studies of Society and the Environment, Technology and the Arts (Sebba & Maxwell, 2005), limited empirical evidence exists of these practices in high-stakes Year 12 English. The extent, nature and timing of teacher feedback for formative assessment purposes as realised in Senior English is therefore unexamined.

Understandings about the characteristics of formative assessment feedback presented in the literature provide a means for considering teacher feedback practices in Queensland. It is a commonly held understanding identified in the literature that feedback should be timely, meaning responsive, frequent and immediate, and occur throughout a segment of learning or unit of work and not just at the end (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black et al., 2004; Bloom et al., 1971; Shavelson et al., 2004; Sliwka & Spencer, 2005). Formative assessment is timed to occur in two ways in the two year English course: in Year 11 as rehearsal for Year 12, and within units of work. In both, formative assessment has a rehearsal function. In the Queensland system where assessment is to be used for dual purposes, the question of how formative assessment feedback is timed must also be considered in relation to the use of summative assessment information for further formative purposes.

Focus is given in the literature to feedback modes and the feedback on different modes of performance. The usefulness of particular feedback modes is contested in the literature, but Marshall’s study (2004) of verbal feedback interactions with students and Peterson and McClay’s research (2010) that presented teacher accounts of valuable feedback practices in writing classrooms place clear emphasis on multiple, recurring opportunities for formative assessment of both written and verbal modes throughout English lessons. Juxtaposed with the expected role of the teacher in formative assessment, and the growing independence of students, outlined above, this highlights the need to look at the ways in which different modes of feedback are utilised by teachers in Year 12 English classrooms,
and for what reasons decisions about mode are made. The ways in which formative assessment opportunities are provided for performances in spoken mode are of interest in this study for what they reveal about the priority given to spoken assessment and feedback. In addition, research on the use of technology in formative assessment is becoming increasingly prevalent. While “using technology” is a key competency identified in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b), there is no strong connection between formative assessment and technology. This study provides the means to consider the utility of technology in these teachers’ formative assessment practices when such technology is becoming increasingly available.

Formative assessment feedback is not restricted to grades or marks in the literature. Reflecting generic observations of the lack of value in providing marks for formative purposes (Black & Wiliam, 2004; Roos & Hamilton, 2005), the research into secondary subject English classrooms includes student reports that marks control their responses to any other feedback (Belanger, 2004). Biggs’ assertion (1992, 1998) that grades could act as valuable feedback for the student when based on a “qualitatively derived hierarchy” (1998, p. 108) of which the student has a working knowledge, provides a reason to consider the place of grades in feedback in Queensland, where defined assessment criteria and standards describe a hierarchy of levels of performance.

A third key message about formative assessment practices drawn from the literature is that there is contestation around the use of defined standards. In contrast with Black and Wiliam’s view (1998) that formative feedback does not necessarily need to be compared with a reference level, Sadler (1989) emphasised defined standards in feedback and in student improvement. Sadler’s position is central in the Queensland Senior Schooling system, where defined criteria and standards schemas are a key part of assessment.10 Hayes, Mills, Christie, and Lingard (2006, p. 83) argued that the Queensland system seeks “overtly to operate in socially just ways through an emphasis on teacher-established standards across schools”, linking the standards with a purpose beyond the assessment of student achievement. As

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10 As previously discussed, in Queensland the defined assessment criteria and standards are formatted in a tabular form setting out the criteria and descriptions of the characteristics of each particular criterion at a range of levels or standards. In some nations, defined assessment criteria and standards are presented as, and referred to, as rubrics.
outlined in Chapter 2, assessment criteria and standards are used to measure student achievement in all Senior School Queensland Studies Authority subjects, based on subject-specific, defined summative, or “exit” standards. Defined criteria and standards are therefore linked to instruction, the improvement of learning, and the fostering of self-evaluative expertise, in addition to “their more traditional use to judge and certify learning outcomes” (Wyatt-Smith, 2001, p. 119). Value is given to assessment criteria and standards used for both formative purposes and summative purposes in descriptions of the Queensland system (Elwood, 2006; Myford, 1999; Sebba, 2006; Shavelson et al., 2004).

A main understanding drawn from the analysis of policy presented in Chapter 2 is that there is an expectation of increasing independence of students. Sadler (1989, 1998) advocated the development of guild knowledge as a means of allowing students to develop an understanding of quality. Drawing on Sadler’s approach, Marshall (2004) stated that the development of English students’ understanding of quality and how to progress is clearly dependent on understandings or experience with a range of examples of quality. In her view, English is a subject in which progress is not easily measured in terms of narrow criteria, but is more fittingly described as progress towards an horizon which suggests “less specified outcomes and multiple pathways” (Parr & Timperley, 2010, p. 80). The possibility that narrow, defined criteria do not present all possibilities of what needs to be known and understood by students is of interest in a system that values defined criteria and standards. The English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) also suggests that assessment criteria and standards should be used as a tool for students to gain expertise in evaluating their own and others’ work as an essential part of developing their own increasing independence from the teacher.

This review has also brought to light conflicting perspectives to those expressed above of the use of defined assessment criteria and standards for formative assessment purposes linked to facilitating learning. These oppositional perspectives see criteria and standards potentially as regulatory, constraining and limiting. First, Harlen (2006) expressed concern that formative feedback should be instructional and about “next steps” in learning and not measured against level-based criteria. Further to this, concerns with explicit assessment criteria were raised in research set in higher education and the post-secondary education and training sector, where attention was given to the possibility that explicitness
could encourage “impoverished learning”, focused solely towards criteria compliance and award achievement (Sadler, 2007; Stobart, 2008; Torrance, 2007). Both of these issues have resonance for the Queensland system, where for improvement purposes students are expected to engage with defined assessment criteria and standards drawn from published exit criteria written by an external body for the purposes of quality assurance. This highlights the need to consider the scope of formative feedback in a year in which summative assessment for certification purposes is foregrounded.

Evidence exists that knowledge of standards can be developed in students (Kirton et al., 2007; Rust et al., 2003), but this evidence does not come from Senior Schooling. Sadler (2010) advised extensive peer-assessment as a way of overcoming the prescriptiveness of criteria and standards templates, but there is no evidence of how this occurs in the high-stakes environment of Year 12 as teachers and students work towards the production and collection of assessment information for certification and reporting purposes.

Some empirical evidence is available of the uses of assessment criteria and standards in Queensland Senior classrooms. Wyatt-Smith’s study (2001) of a Queensland Senior English class indicated that assessment criteria and standards did not form part of the evaluative talk of the teacher or students. This study drew on an earlier English Senior Syllabus (QBSSS, 1987) with different assessment criteria and standards. As outlined in Chapter 2, the implementation of the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) was contested and this impacted on the final version of the assessment criteria and standards framed in the document, as well as on what was assessed. It is noted that challenges to teachers’ understanding of the assessment criteria may potentially have influenced their use of the document.

Teachers’ accounts of their understanding and use of assessment criteria and standards in Year 12 Health and Physical Education (Hay & Macdonald, 2008) indicated that teachers interpret and mediate assessment criteria and standards for themselves and in ways that make the original criteria and standards inaccessible to their students. The opportunity exists, therefore, to consider how interpretation and mediation feature in the way teachers in Senior English classrooms make assessment criteria and standards available to students.

In addition, it has been reported that secondary school students find the language of criteria and standards difficult and consequently do not engage with assessment criteria and standards for improvement purposes (Broadfoot et al., 1988). Coupled with Wyatt-Smith’s
finding above, consideration can be given to the suggestion that language can interfere with the use of assessment criteria and standards by students. Together with the contestations regarding the use of standards in the broad formative assessment research literature, the insights gained from these two studies highlight the need to consider assessment criteria and standards as part of teachers’ formative assessment practices in a system that prioritises this use to develop students’ growing evaluative expertise and increasing independence.

Moni, van Kraayenoord, and Baker (1999) provided further considerations for this study in their discussion of teachers’ perceptions of Years 1-10 school-based literacy assessment systems used in Queensland state schools since 1994. In their study, teachers revealed that they felt “constrained by external forces such as school requirements for assessment” and advised that criteria-based assessment should not be viewed as “a means of empowering teachers in their professional roles as evaluators” (p. 37).

**Implications of thematic thread three for this study: formative assessment roles and interactions.** A key message from the literature in relation to formative assessment roles and interactions is that the division of responsibility for formative assessment is weighted primarily towards the role of the teacher, who mediates and enables student improvement through the provision of teacher feedback and the development of students’ self-assessment skills. These understandings of role are also prominent in the Queensland system. The potential agency of the student in their own learning is highlighted, as is the enabling role of the teacher in providing opportunities for students to self-evaluate and become increasingly independent. Further to this, the teacher is also responsible for providing feedback for improvement purposes. This is a complex situation. Student agency exists relative to the role of the teacher as the formative assessment practitioner, and relative to students’ use of the assessment criteria and standards. The lack of empirical evidence of how this is done, and the contestations in the literature of the use of standards to do this, provide an opening to consider the practices of teachers as they fulfil dual roles in both formative assessment and summative assessment, and the relative agency of teachers and students in formative assessment.

A second key message is that varied opinions exist on the formative role of the teacher in the production of student work for summative grading. These opinions range from Sadler’s (1989) assertion that assessment items for summative assessment purposes should
be produced by students alone to Crooks’ argument (2001) that formative assessment could be described as work-in-progress with the final, summative assessment version being informed by the formative assessment feedback received during its production stages. Given the focus on both formative assessment and summative assessment in the Queensland system, as outlined in Chapter 2, with the teacher taking on roles in improvement and judgement, it could be expected that summative assessment is potentially produced through interactions between teachers and students. The lack of consensus in the literature provides the chance to examine teachers’ roles in a system where feedback of teachers and others is legitimately provided as part of the summative assessment preparation and the focus is also on students’ increasing independence.

The third key message is that emphasis is given to the role of the student in managing their own learning, a process that Marshall (2007) described as characteristic of subject English or literacy studies (Davies, 2003; Johnston & Costello, 2005; van Kraayenoord, 1994) and which is recognised by students as part of the process of assessment (McDonald & Boud, 2003). The point is clearly made that student agency must be actively developed by the teacher, and this is foregrounded in Sadler’s descriptions (1989) of the developing evaluative expertise of the student as they take a greater role in their own learning. However, the balance of evidence that students will self-assess is drawn from interventions designed to develop such skills (Kirton et al., 2007; Rust, et al., 2003). Peer-assessment is viewed as a pre-requisite skill to self-improvement (Diab, 2011; Sadler, 2010). A gap exists in the understanding of how self- and peer-assessment functions in a Senior Schooling system that prioritises student independence, but that also requires students to focus on summative assessment achievement that will affect post school further study and employment options.\footnote{Non-authority, technical and further education (TAFE)-accredited courses offered in Queensland secondary schools also affect post school further study and employment options. No reference will be made to formative assessment in these courses, which are beyond the scope of this study.} It also highlights the need to investigate in this study whether students are explicitly taught to self-assess.

The fourth key message is that formative assessment is to be used to attend to individual students’ needs (ARG, 2002a; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen & James, 1997;
Pollard, 1990). This is identified strongly as part of the pedagogy of subject English (Black & Wiliam, 2006; Wiliam, 2002). Concerns are raised by some researchers that formative assessment may not provide the same opportunities for all students in a class, with the possibility that these interactions between the individual student and the teacher may not always occur. How opportunities are provided for diverse individuals and groups with particular educational needs in large-cohort classrooms needs further exploration. Of interest are the ways in which teachers provide formative assessment opportunities in Senior English classrooms for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, as well as English Second Language students.

Questions are raised in the literature about whether formative assessment is interactionally accomplished in response to student needs, or whether what teachers do is highly-regulated practice, subject to system and school requirements. As already identified, a feature of the Queensland system is that it provides opportunities for teachers to design curriculum and assessment and makes explicit a role for students in their own improvement. Teachers practise formative assessment in the school context, in the context of their particular classroom, while accounting for system requirements associated with certification and reporting and guided by the key policy document, the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b). Their direct responsibility for summative assessment introduces a level of complexity to the understanding of their formative assessment role and provides an opportunity to consider how responsive teachers can be in relation to the needs of students as they strive to meet certification requirements. Key considerations include whether teachers’ practices are therefore regulated by the summative assessment demands that must be met and whether their decisions about the nature and function of formative assessment are driven by interactions, or responsive to the system.

In the literature, parents are largely positioned as focused on summative assessment grades. Empirical evidence of their role in formative assessment does not feature strongly. The Queensland English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) describes parents as the recipients of formative assessment information and as one of several potential sources of formative assessment feedback. As discussed in Chapter 2, assignment verification processes require students to indicate who has contributed feedback and at what stages of assignment preparation. It is also evident from the discussion in Chapter 2 that greater emphasis is given
to formative assessment as occurring between teachers and students. This study considers how teachers account for the formative feedback of others in their students’ improvement and what role, if any, parents have in high-stakes assessment.

**Bringing Together the Warrant for the Study**

As can be seen in the discussion above, the warrant for this study comes from the intersection of several factors. First, the review of literature has identified contestations in understandings of formative assessment purposes, practices, roles and interactions. Second, confirmation of and departures from these understandings have opened up when viewed in relation to the formative assessment practices required in Year 12 English in Queensland Senior Schooling, presented above. Third, there is a general lack of empirical data of the Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced system in practice since its original inception in the early 1970s. Fourth, there are few teacher accounts of their formative assessment practices in the final year of schooling that prioritises the collection of summative assessment information for certification and reporting.

While consideration is given to the requirements of the system, in Queensland consideration must also be given to the requirements set out in the school context in which teachers practise formative assessment. References have been made in the literature to system and school site validity as influencing teachers’ assessment work (Freebody & Wyatt-Smith, 2004). This study provides an opportunity to consider how teachers go about meeting the requirements of both system and site and what influence this has on their practices. Using the discussion above as a starting point, this study examines how assessment is used for formative purposes in this system context, in the school context, and within the particular context provided of teachers’ Senior English classrooms.

**Beyond the Literature**

As the underpinning theoretical reference point, Broadfoot’s (1996) view of assessment as socially situated allows the case reports in this thesis also to be viewed against the perspectives of literature and policy understandings that carry forward. The three thematic threads are reflected in discussions in the case reports, which are empirically generated by the data. The cases can also be viewed against contextual factors that arise during the case studies, reflecting both within school and outside of school institutional
influences. This approach enables this study to operate at the interface of research and policy (theoretical understandings) and the social interactions of the classroom (social understandings). The examination of the key data sets from the teacher accounts—teacher talk and representative artefacts about formative assessment—is presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

The case studies examine what the participating teachers understand of formative assessment, its purposes and the way in which it is enacted in their classrooms. The focus is not on how matches are made to policy directives, but an interest exists in the contextual and interactional factors that influence teachers’ understandings and practices. Also of interest is the manner in which information about formative assessment is mediated for/by teachers and others.

The review has revealed competing understandings about the enactment of formative assessment in the research literature. Therefore, related questions about how teachers enact formative assessment in Year 12 English classrooms in Queensland schools arise from considering these understandings in this distinctive setting. The literature does not make available a cohesive understanding of formative assessment, feedback and assessment criteria written for high-stakes, summative assessment purposes. While some subject English specific research has been presented here, much of the findings about formative assessment are “generic”, or relative to other subject areas. They may not, therefore, be applicable or suitable to English. The study of the Queensland context to follow in the case reports will offer new insights into teachers’ formative assessment practices in Senior English.

The case reports explore teacher accounts of their formative assessment practices, allowing an examination of the relationship of these elements. The case reports draw on the main understandings presented in Chapter 2 as well as the thematic threads and key messages presented in the review of literature. The thematic threads presented here do not correlate exactly to the discussion that is presented in the case reports, but the organisation of the discussion draws on the literature review. While purposes and practices are key findings of the case reports, interactions and roles and relationships permeate the discussion, explored in relation to the Queensland system context and policy interpretation in school contexts, as well as in relation to the interactions that occur in teachers’ reported formative assessment practices in classroom contexts.
The following chapter presents the methodology of the study and an outline of the analytic approach. It explores the reasons case study methodology was employed and the choice of data collection methods, participants, and sites, in order to reveal the teachers’ understandings of the nature and function of formative assessment through their accounts of practice.
Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter the methods and procedures of data collection and analysis for two case studies are presented. The primary purpose of the case reports in this study is to develop an understanding of the formative assessment practices of Senior English teachers in the Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment system, as outlined in Chapter 1. A second, related purpose is to develop an understanding of the multiple and complex influences on teachers’ understanding of the purpose and practice of formative assessment in the high-stakes Year 12 environment. Two experienced teachers of Senior English from different school sites were interviewed to enable a focus across schools, but within the same system. Teacher talk and formative assessment artefacts were the principal data gathered to enable the practice of formative assessment in Year 12 English classrooms to be examined.

The Use of Case

A qualitative research paradigm was chosen for the study as the research questions were designed to investigate teachers’ accounts of formative assessment understandings and practices. The study draws on case study methodology, identified by Shulman (1996) as enabling reflective analysis of professional practice in educational research. The central issue, and therefore the general purpose of this study, is to examine how formative assessment functions in Senior English classrooms. This study makes available hitherto unpublished insider accounts of teachers’ formative assessment practices in this school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced system. A key purpose of this study is to make available teacher voices and perspectives, so that the manner in which the individual teachers account for their formative assessment decisions is featured. This includes a focus on their accounts of boundary-crossing (Walker & Nocon, 2007) as they operate at the interface of system, school and classroom contexts, and between assessing for both formative assessment purposes and summative assessment purposes.

Yin (1994, p. 13) defined the purpose of case as being to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context”, a starting point for the research design of this study. The phenomenon is the formative assessment practices of teachers in Year 12 English
classrooms. The cases present the opportunity to focus on the “doing” of this work in the Queensland system and the choices the participant teachers make in practising formative assessment. The investigation centres on teachers’ reports of the nature of formative assessment and the range of activities in their classrooms against the background of Queensland policy and previous research.

Two cases have been chosen, with each case acting as a “functioning specific”, or “bounded case” (Stake, 1994, p. 236). The notion of context is central to the study and each case is situated in interrelated contexts. The classroom, the teacher and the students, their interactions and actions in meeting assessment requirements in Year 12, form an integrated enactment of practice, influenced by system requirements and the particular context of the school. Examined in this way, each case reveals specifics of practice, with a focus on the understandings that underpin each teacher’s formative assessment decisions. The cases are not treated as interrelated studies, but separate instrumental case studies that provide insight into an issue (Stake, 2000). The interest comes from what can be learned from them as separate studies and through the reflections on the cases in Chapter 7 that identify similarities and differences between the two teachers’ formative assessment practices.

**The purposes of the case reports.** The case reports investigate teachers’ accounts of their formative assessment practices through a focus on teacher talk and assessment artefacts, enabling scrutiny of their formative assessment understandings. These include how teachers and students interact with formative assessment and implications for the roles and relationships of both sets of participants. The cases provide insights into teachers’ understanding of their role in relation to formative assessment, and as it relates to interactions with students, and system and school expectations. A related focus is on teachers’ understanding and use of assessment criteria and standards for formative assessment purposes.

**The identity of the researcher.** In this section I begin by positioning myself, the researcher, within this qualitative study. In particular, I want to highlight the manner in which I have come to this study, and the way in which I am both insider and outsider to the study. At the time I gathered the data I was an experienced Senior English teacher working part-time in a school and part-time at a university. I was a member of the District Review
Panel and, until recently, a member of the English Subject Advisory Committee. I developed an interest in teachers’ use of criteria and standards, piqued at first by changes from the generic documents used under the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSS, 1987) to the task-specific criteria and standards employed in the subsequent *Senior English Trial/Pilot Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 1996) and the *Senior English Extended Trial/Pilot Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 1999) and its later iteration, the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b). In part, these practice issues prompted my enrolment in the Doctor of Education degree program.

A number of research papers I wrote as part of course work requirements explored work colleagues’ use of the criteria and standards for grading and feedback and for formative purposes in the classroom. The understandings I gathered about teachers’ concerns in using these documents with students in the classroom provided a basis from which to begin my review of the literature, the policy, and ultimately, my examination of the practices of teachers. Having gained insights through my work in a familiar setting, I deliberately decided to focus on other schools to examine the practices in different site contexts from my own.

As indicated above, the two cases are considered to be bounded systems, functioning within themselves but influenced by external factors associated with context (Stake, 1994). My own experiences allowed me to study these bounded systems from an informed, insider perspective, having taught and assessed Senior English in several different sites. I also examined these systems from an uninformed, outsider perspective with respect to the particular school and classroom of each teacher. It is acknowledged that the boundaries between insider-researcher and outsider-researcher are not always clearly demarcated (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001) and in this study the lack of boundaries added complexity.

I began data collection with the two case study teachers by identifying myself as a doctoral student, who was also a practising, experienced teacher of Senior English, having taught in Queensland state secondary schools for a period of time. Given the teachers’ awareness of this I was treated as someone who had direct experience of secondary English teaching and knowledge of assessment requirements, able to refer to the Queensland system in ways informed by my own experiences. Hence, I could listen to their stories with some shared insight into classroom practice. They responded openly, providing information about approaches and practices including those they identified as outside perceived system or
school requirements. Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998, p. 172) understand that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee “influence(s) the nature of the information subsequently gathered”. My experiences indicate that the collegial relationship established with these teachers resulted in some benefits in terms of what the participants were willing to talk about. I believe that this contributed to the richness of the data that was ultimately gathered.

There were also disadvantages. Before the first interview, one of the teachers expressed some awkwardness in telling me about her classroom practices, as she believed she was giving me information I already had as an experienced teacher. It was necessary to reassure her that it was her account that was of interest and that we were not making meaning of her experience by relating it to my own. The focus was to be on her talk and artefacts for what they revealed about her practices.

It was my desire to “obtain participant trust and comfort” with the goal of more “detailed, honest information” (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 225), but also to allow the teachers the latitude to report their own experiences openly and fully. It was necessary to keep any personal opinions I held about the system unstated, while interacting sufficiently to encourage the teachers to talk about their own experiences and insights. The focus of the interview was on formative assessment in the context of each teacher’s classroom practice.

**Method of Inquiry**

The key research question for this study is: What is the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment practices in their Year 12 English classrooms? This question grew from consideration of my experiences as a teacher, Review Panellist and Subject Advisory Committee member. It grew from my engagement with the *Senior English Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) and other policy documents, and from my initial engagement with the research literature.

The method of inquiry was influenced by the broad nature of the key research question. However, this investigation of the “nature and function” of teachers’ practices was not concerned with what was observable in the classroom. It called for the investigation of underlying views and understandings that influence teachers’ approaches to formative assessment and their reported formative assessment practices. The decision was taken not to design the inquiry around point-in-time observations that would focus the study on what could be observed on a particular day or phase of the year, in a particular classroom. Of
interest were teachers’ own reports of the practices they relied on across Year 12. The study was designed to allow a broad picture of actual practices to be painted, providing insights into how formative assessment is understood and enacted in Year 12 English.

The following sub-questions were designed to examine self-reports of the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment practices:

- How does formative assessment function in the classroom in an academic year when summative assessment information is gathered for certification and reporting on exit from the Senior Schooling course study?
- What is the nature of teachers’ formative assessment practices in Year 12 English classrooms?
- How do teachers enact official expectations for the use of criteria and standards for formative assessment purposes in Year 12 English classrooms?
- What roles do teachers, students and others (e.g. parents) play in formative assessment?
- How do teachers provide for individual learning needs through formative assessment as they fulfil summative assessment requirements in Year 12 English classrooms?
- What are the influences on teachers’ reported enactment of formative assessment?
- How do teachers interact with official formative assessment expectations and requirements?

The discussions of reported practices revealed teachers’ wide-ranging views about the function and form of formative assessment in this system, and in teachers’ classrooms. These sub-questions provide a focus on what is contextual in this study: accounts formed in contexts; an emphasis on summative assessment in Year 12; and the use of assessment criteria and standards in keeping with the system focus. While contextual, they also reflect insights and understandings drawn from the literature. The literature review provides background to the discussion that follows in the form of key messages about teacher practice organised around thematic threads identified in the literature in the preceding chapter.
The examination of policy in Chapter 2 also provides essential background information about understandings made available to teachers regarding the enactment of formative assessment in the Queensland system. The insights into the official position on formative assessment practices in Year 12 English provide background information for the examination of teachers’ accounts in the case reports. They also serve to highlight the interrelated nature of the contexts of system, school and classroom. Three thematic threads were identified in the analysis presented in the review of the research literature in Chapter 3: formative assessment purposes; formative assessment practices; and the roles and interactions that are central to formative assessment. From these threads key messages about teacher practice were identified. Revealing agreements and contestations about formative assessment in the research, these messages were used in combination with the accounts of formative assessment presented in the policy to identify implications for this study of teacher practice.

Chapter 2 highlighted the changes that resulted in the current school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland system as well as the contribution of the Discussion Papers to understandings in this system. Key to the discussion of policy in Chapter 2 was the analysis of the formative assessment understandings made available in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b), the key document intended to guide teacher practice. Four central understandings were identified: formative assessment is for improvement purposes; formative assessment is distinct from summative assessment; the teacher has a central role in the provision of formative feedback; and there is an expectation that students will become increasingly independent of the teacher through formative assessment. However, the analyses undertaken in the case studies are not intended as a checklist of teacher compliance, but to ascertain the conditions under which teacher practice is influenced by centrally developed education policy. In conjunction with the review of literature, the information gathered from the Queensland policy provided the warrant for the study and informed the examination of the case studies. The analysis itself was iterative, drawing on the review of literature, which brought to light unresolved issues relating to contexts, purposes, practices and relationships. The case reports are presented to carry forward these issues and to examine how they relate to situated practices in different settings.
From the research questions a clear emphasis on teachers’ accounts evolved. While the literature and policy provide information about requirements and expectations in relation to formative assessment, Senior English teachers’ voices from the Queensland system are largely silent. In order to hear teachers’ opinions, views and reports on their understandings and practice of formative assessment in Senior Schooling in Queensland, the inquiry method included a focus on interviews. Further data was gathered in the form of classroom artefacts that were part of teachers’ practices. The investigation centres on teachers’ accounts of the nature of formative assessment and the range of activities in their classrooms against the background of research literature and policy.

The Cases—Schools and Teachers

Two case studies were conducted: each focused on one Senior English teacher in one school. Case study approach leads to the collection of extensive data, so large numbers of cases are not manageable. Two case studies were ultimately chosen to enable a probing examination within each site and examination of differences and similarities across the two sites.

The sampling process for schools and participants was purposive. I had worked in secondary schools teaching Senior English and on a District Review Panel for Senior English in a particular Education Queensland District for a number of years prior to this study. I thus had a broad knowledge of schools in the district. Based on this knowledge, I made choices in relation to contrasts schools could afford the study including: size, leadership structure, demographic characteristics of the students, Year 12 cohort size, and school sector. Juxtaposed with these points of difference are commonalities resulting from the schools belonging to one Education District, and thus receiving feedback and advice from the same District Review Panel. Further, both schools were involved in the 1999 extended trial-pilot and extended trial of the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 1999a, 199b). It could be suggested, because of this, there was parity of experience with agencies from outside the

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12 In Queensland secondary schooling there are three school sectors: Education Queensland (government-provided education); Queensland Catholic Education; and Independent Schools Queensland.
school. Pseudonyms are used in the discussion of school sites and the two case study teachers in order to protect the identity of the participants.

**Case site 1.** St. Catherine’s College is a small, non-government secondary school with a student population of approximately 450 at the time of data gathering (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010). The school is situated in a small to medium-sized regional centre. Teachers in the English department work as part of a leadership structure that includes a Principal, Assistants to the Principal and Subject Area Coordinators (referred to as SAC). The English SAC has responsibility for curriculum matters related to the suite of English subjects offered in the school including Years 8-10 English, Senior English and English Communication (Years 11 and 12) and is the line manager for the teachers of the three Senior English classes. In 2008, the graduating Year 12 cohort included approximately 90 students, but not all students would have studied Senior English. Three per cent of students in the school were categorised as having a language background other than English and two per cent as Indigenous.

The MySchool website, (ACARA, 2010) is an Australian Federal Government-run site providing data on schools in Australia that is used to compare the performances of schools in Australia. The site provides a value for each school against an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). The ICSEA score is calculated using Australian Bureau of Statistics data and school data, and identifies the key attributes of the student population of the school focusing on socio-economic characteristics of the areas where they live; whether the school is regional (provincial) or remote; and the proportion of Indigenous students enrolled at the school. St. Catherine’s College’s ICSEA score at the time of data collection was 986 (ACARA, 2010), in comparison with the national average of 1000. In terms of the distribution of socio-educational advantage across the school’s population, 27 per cent of students were in the bottom quartile. One per cent of students were in the top quartile. Data capture occurred in the first year (2008) that the MySchool website was produced and it should be noted after a change in the formula of socio-education index St. Catherine’s distribution in 2009 altered to 22 per cent in the bottom quartile, 22 per cent in the top quartile and an ICSEA score of 1043. The College is an established institution in the town, drawing from many families with established links to the College over a number of years. St. Catherine’s SWP (2003) characterises the town as “not especially affluent”, but
does not categorise the students along class lines. Parents are responsible for paying fees associated with tuition and other expenses to supplement government funding.

**Case site 2.** The second school, Plains State High School (Plains SHS) is a medium to large state secondary school with a student population of approximately 990 students at the time of data gathering. The school is situated in a medium-sized regional centre. Teachers in the English department work as part of a leadership structure that includes a Principal, Deputy Principals and subject Heads of Department. The English Head of Department (referred to as HOD) has responsibility for curriculum and other matters related to the suite of English subjects offered in the school, including Years 8-10 English, Senior English and English Communication (Years 11 and 12), and is the line manager for teachers working in his department. In 2008, the graduating Year 12 cohort included approximately 120 students, but not all students studied Senior English. Several teachers taught Senior English. Three per cent of students in the school were categorised as Indigenous, while there were no students recorded as having a language background other than English.

Plains SHS’s ICSEA score at the time was 967. In terms of the distribution of socio-educational advantage across the school’s population, 37 per cent of students were in the bottom quartile. Two per cent of students were in the top quartile. The ICSEA score has changed little since 2008. The Senior English SWP identifies the town as working-class and the area and its students as having low socio-economic status. As already indicated, this is a public school, run by the State Government Department of Education and Training (D.E.T). Parents are responsible for meeting some expenses associated with their children’s education, but there is no fee-paying structure associated with tuition.

These two cases provide insight into an area of teacher classroom practice—formative assessment—in a particular jurisdiction, at a particular stage of schooling. They meet Yin’s (1994) requirement that cases be worthy of study in several ways. They provide, in the first instance, a means of examining teacher formative assessment practices and add to the understandings already discussed in the literature review. They provide insight into the practices of teachers in the same system context, but in different school contexts. They provide an opportunity to look at how teachers are influenced by policy in the system context and how they interpret their individual roles in relation to assessment requirements.
determined in the school context, and how they are influenced by the particular classroom contexts in which they work.

The case studies are consistent with the study’s interest in assessment as social practice and accordingly adopt a situated perspective. The different schools provide contrasts around sectors, size of school, socio-economic status of the students, and the nature of the local school community, as teachers and students go about the business of meeting summative assessment requirements in Year 12 within the context of individual classrooms. It is anticipated that in the school context, and in individual classrooms, formative assessment is enacted in keeping with decisions about how the system is interpreted, what is valued about assessment and its purpose, what the influence is of others from outside of the classroom, and how interactions between teachers and students for formative purposes are orchestrated.

**Choice of participants.** As two cases were examined in this study, the method of participant selection was again purposive. Criteria were established for teachers’ participation. I contacted Principals from the chosen schools to describe the study and the desirable characteristics of potential teacher participants. The first criterion was that teacher participants have a minimum of 10 years’ experience teaching Senior English. There were two considerations in requiring such teaching experience. The first was that teachers would be suitably familiar with the Syllabus and Senior Schooling issues, including external moderation, so that any discontinuities between policy and practice were not simply a result of lack of experience. As a result, they would have worked with the then current Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) over a period of several years. The second consideration was informed by earlier coursework research that indicated that expert teachers have different, more effective strategies than novices. An expert is informed by “the content and general organization of [his/her] knowledge”, in approaching contextualised problems to do with assessment (Olson & Biolsi, 1991, p. 241) and utilises this knowledge more effectively (Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Lajoie, 2003). The differences between how novices and experts approach formative assessment were outside the parameters of this study.

Another criterion for selecting the teacher participants was each individual teacher’s length of service at the school. A long relationship with the particular school meant that observations could be made about the influence a faculty and its staff could have on teachers’
understanding of assessment and the importance, or otherwise, of relationships among teachers in teaching teams and the English Department more generally. A third criterion was that the teacher was to be classroom-based and not an English Department Head. From my own experience in schools, I knew that English Department Heads may have more access to training in the use of the Syllabus than a classroom-based teacher. She or he could also have a different relationship with policy documents and the District Review Panel.

Allowing Principals to select participants in this way both removed and introduced potential sources of bias. It could be anticipated that, in part, the Principals’ selections may have been motivated by a desire to approach participants they viewed as competent and effective to report on practices occurring in their school. However, this did not mean that these participants were less worthy of study. Principal selection also worked to remove any bias involved in making choices myself between participants.

Data Collection

The data collection tools employed in the study were interviews and artefact analysis, as indicated in Table 2. The purpose of examining teacher talk and teacher documents was to gain an insight into both teachers’ understanding of formative assessment and its purpose and their formative assessment practices in their particular school context, as well as the work they do in enacting formative assessment in the context of their own classrooms. The artefacts were treated as evidence of the teachers’ practices and their interaction with policy. They included documents created by the teachers and school documents written by the English Department Head to be used by the teachers for formative assessment purposes, or to inform their formative assessment practices. Although express reference may not be made in the case reports to each artefact, all of these artefacts were drawn on to inform the case reports.

The artefacts provided rich data, with a particular analysis focus for each artefact type relative to its link to the respective teacher’s formative assessment practices, as depicted later in Table 7. The artefact data was attended to in response to issues raised in the talk and independently as representative of an approach to formative assessment employed by the particular teacher. The interviews provided a point of focused analysis both on the teachers’ stated understandings of formative assessment purposes, and also on their reported practices and interactions for the purpose of formative assessment.
Table 2

Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data types</th>
<th>Case Report 1 - Ros</th>
<th>Case Report 2 - Susan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td>Interviewee two (Ros) – female</td>
<td>Interviewee one (Susan) – female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 1 interview - August, 2008</td>
<td>Phase 1 interview - May, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2 interview - January, 2009*</td>
<td>Phase 2 interview - July, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formative assessment artefacts</strong></td>
<td>SWP (school document)</td>
<td>SWP (school document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher planning documents</td>
<td>Unit overviews in the SWP (SWP1R)</td>
<td>Teacher planning documents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• unit plans (TPD1S,2S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• semester plan (TPD3S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student handouts</strong></td>
<td>Student handouts:</td>
<td>Student handouts:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summative assessment “suggestions” sheet (SH-O1R)</td>
<td>Activity sheets used to analyse a focus text (SH-O1S,2S,3S,7S,9S,11S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills’ development exercises/information (SH-O2R,3R)</td>
<td>Activity sheets for group activities (SH-O2S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genre examples (SH-O4R)</td>
<td>Genre examples (SH-O4S,5S,6S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Genre structure (SH-O8S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summative assessment task sheets for 2 years of program</strong></td>
<td>Comprehensive set of duplicate copies of summative assessment task sheets from the 2 years of the course; accompanying assessment criteria and standards (in SWP1R)</td>
<td>Comprehensive set of duplicate copies of summative assessment task specifications for tasks from the 2 years of the course; accompanying assessment criteria and standards (in SWP1S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(school document)</td>
<td>A range of completed assessment items graded by teacher on assessment criteria and standards sheets, including summative assessment task specifications (SAGS 1S,2S,3R)</td>
<td>A range of completed assessment items graded by teacher on assessment criteria and standards sheets, including summative assessment task specifications (SAGS 1S,2S,3S)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Data types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data types</th>
<th>Case Report 1 - Ros</th>
<th>Case Report 2 - Susan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rough drafts</td>
<td>Duplicate copies of student rough draft of summative assessment pieces with teacher feedback (SRD 1R,2R,3R)</td>
<td>Duplicate copies of student rough draft of summative assessment pieces with teacher feedback (SRD 1S,2S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-generated criteria handouts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-generated criteria (TGC 1S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklists</td>
<td>Checklist for peer-assessment of spoken activity</td>
<td>Self-assessment checklist (SA1S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SH-O5R)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Coding used in analysis. *The disparity in timing between the interviews for cases 1 and 2 was due to the unexpected illness of the researcher just prior to the scheduled Phase 2 interview that was originally to occur in October 2008. The Phase 2 interview had to be re-scheduled for January, 2009 as the teacher was on long service leave from her school until then. The Phase 2 interview questions were designed in response to matters raised in the Phase 1 interview, or matters not clearly discussed in the Phase 1 interview. References were therefore made during the Phase 2 interview to data gathered in the previous interview. This reference to discussions that occurred during the Phase 1 interview, including references to specific comments made by the teacher and artefacts discussed, therefore lessened any impact of the time lapse between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 interviews, and the disparity between the interview timelines across the cases.*
**Interviews.** Each case study included two staged interviews: Phase 1 and Phase 2, conducted between May, 2008 and January, 2009. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Approximately 5 hours of interview data was collected, resulting in transcripts of some 50,000 words. Ethics approval was sought and granted from Griffith University, Education Queensland, and Brisbane Catholic Education.

Phase 1 was the primary interview. An interview protocol was developed that outlined specific, but open-ended questions for the Phase 1 interviews, organised into three sections (see Appendix B for details). The first section involved questions about each teacher’s teaching background and experience as an assessor. The second section investigated each teacher’s understandings about formative assessment in Senior English, and her particular classroom practices. In the third section, each teacher was asked to respond to quotations from the Syllabus outlining key ideas about formative assessment and/or its practice, and relate these to her own practices. Table 3 provides example quotations from the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b). As already indicated, this was not a policy into practice study, though teachers’ reactions to key policy statements about formative assessment were of interest for what they would reveal about the teacher’s hitherto private or unpublished conceptualisation of her formative assessment practice and understanding of it relative to system requirements.

Table 3

*English Senior Syllabus Quotations from Phase 1 Interviews (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 18-21)*

| Quotation 2: Formative assessment...is used to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers about achievement over the course of study. This enables students and teachers to identify the students’ strengths and weaknesses so students may improve their achievement and better manage their own learning. | Quotation 3: Timely and constructive feedback from teachers and peers helps student to develop their use of language and encourages them to refine their efforts. ...however, it is vital for the classroom teacher to assist students in developing editorial independence, using the criteria and standards to develop students’ self-evaluative expertise. |
Phase 2 interviews were staged to occur after the Phase 1 interviews had been transcribed and a first-pass analysis had been conducted. The first-pass analysis included completing a Syllabus checklist (see Appendix C), designed to determine whether the interview had included a discussion of key understandings about formative assessment made available in the Syllabus document. The aim was to check that the participant had been given the opportunity to speak about formative assessment in a range of ways. The checklist was therefore used to identify further information that needed to be accessed. The first-pass analysis also included a focus on topics that had been opened up, but that had not been adequately explored, or had raised further questions that had not been satisfactorily answered. The Phase 2 interviews were planned for this purpose.

A second set of specific questions was developed for each of the Phase 2 interviews (see Appendix D) to cover or re-cover topics that had not been adequately addressed in each Phase 1 interview. Table 4 provides example questions from Phase 2 interviews. As can be seen, connections were made back to concepts, issues and practices raised in the original interviews and further clarification or examples were requested. Both teachers were asked to bring other accompanying or focus artefacts to the second interviews that contributed further insights into issues raised.

Table 4

*Example Questions - Phase 2 Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Report 1</th>
<th>Case Report 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where you use homework tasks/essays to determine what students’ understanding of a particular concept or skill is, what would then occur in class when you hand this back? What sort of comments would be made – written, verbal? Would the feedback on this determine what happens next in class, or does this take place in a relationship just between you and the students as individuals?</td>
<td>In your original interview you mentioned accepting multiple drafts from students, receiving these from VHA range students. Does this continue throughout Year 12 until the unseen exam for the last piece of assessment?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do formative assessment tasks attract individual feedback if they occur in the classroom? Are there ever any group tasks in the classroom that attract feedback to the group from the teacher? From other students?

Could you talk through the connection between the simplified criteria and the official criteria? What do you ask students to do with them? What are you looking for in how students are engaging with them?

The four interviews were both interactional and interpretive (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Set questions, as described in the interview protocol (Appendix B), and required responses to Syllabus quotations (Table 3) did not inhibit the talk, which was led by both interviewees into other topics and areas during the interviews. During each of the four interviews it was necessary to use the prepared questions as a checklist at the end of the interview to ensure all of the intended topics had been explored.

As already indicated, because of my perceived insider status to the profession, the teachers were open both about their practices and their attitudes to the demands made of them and their students through the summative assessment focus of Year 12. My own knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 1994), together with the semi-structured nature of the interviews and the participants’ interest in the topic, could also have contributed to the teachers’ openness. In addition, this openness could also have been a result of the anonymity guaranteed to the participants and the possibility that this presented teachers with an opportunity to air concerns regarding the system and their school. This does not mean that what the teachers have reported to me can be considered to be objective truth. Instead, they represent positioned accounts of practice.

All interviews were audio-taped and fully-transcribed for analysis and conducted with the participants’ informed consent (Appendix E). As previously identified, pseudonyms were used for the participants (Ros and Susan) and the school sites (Plains SHS and St. Catherine’s College), which have been described in the study only in terms of general characteristics. The audio-tapes were subsequently disposed of and measures have been taken for storage of all data that ensures participants’ anonymity will be preserved.
**Artefacts.** As mentioned already, the two participants were asked to bring to both Phase 1 and 2 interviews assessment artefacts that referenced, or represented their formative assessment practices. Further, access to a copy of each School’s SWP was requested. The two teachers interpreted the request for formative assessment artefacts in similar ways, demonstrated in the categories summarised in Table 2. It is necessary to note that these artefacts included not only teacher-generated artefacts in the form of planning documents and classroom handouts, but also student-generated artefacts including annotated rough drafts. This last type of document yielded teachers’ written commentary on the quality of the piece of work overall.

The presence of these artefacts meant two things: the artefacts formed part of the interview process; and the talk centred both on accounts of recalled practices and specifically on the artefacts as examples of actual practice. The artefacts were used as part of the interviews to provide evidence of teacher practices. At various times during the interview, they were referred to by the teacher to support what they were saying about their practices, and at other times by the researcher to probe deeper into the teacher’s practices. Table 5 shows connections made between example artefacts and related topics drawn from the talk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artefact</th>
<th>Teacher talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student rough drafts</td>
<td>Formative feedback; student dependence; preparation for summative assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pieces; improvement; summative assessment grades; summative assessment focus;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interactions with students; individual student needs; student take-up of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>feedback; unit phases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-generated criteria</td>
<td>Assessment criteria and standards; relationships with students; student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and standards</td>
<td>dependence; preparation for summative assessment pieces; understanding of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>standards; examining exemplars.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated in Table 5, the discussions afforded by the artefacts were wide-ranging. The interview talk moved from questions to artefacts as directed by the participants’ answers and questions from the researcher.

**Data analysis.** Data analysis was informed by the socio-cultural framing, which permits an opening to consider the interactions between teachers and others of influence in the workplace. As noted, it was also informed by the thematic threads identified in the Literature Review, Chapter 3: purposes; practices; and roles and interactions. These threads acted as background to the analysis, but did not explicitly drive it. Instead, the study is based on Yin’s (2003) case description analytic strategy, with the analysis organised around general characteristics and relations of the phenomenon. Ultimately, links were identified between this analysis and the key messages raised in the literature and main ideas identified in the policy, and the organisation of the case reports reflects this. While understandings about formative assessment drawn from the policy are brought up where relevant in the case reports, connections between the literature and the case reports are represented in Chapter 6.

**The interviews.** Interview recordings were fully transcribed. The transcription process involved the verbatim recording of the interviewee’s words, and the identification of textual markers. See Appendix F for further details. The electronic files of interviews enabled repeated access for reading and re-reading, for consideration and re-consideration of emerging codes and for analysis purposes. The analysis of the body of data involved reading and re-reading as an interactive process. This included reading: 1) to determine what teachers said about their formative assessment practices; 2) to determine what connections teachers made between what they were doing and why; and 3) to look at how teachers employed and produced particular artefacts for formative assessment purposes.

As suggested earlier, slightly different processes were applied to Phase 1 and Phase 2 interviews. After the Phase 1 interviews were transcribed, two analyses were applied: the Syllabus checklist (Appendix C); and a first-pass analysis to identify topics inadequately explored, or any questions from the interview schedule that were not answered in enough depth.

After the Phase 2 interviews were completed, the analysis of the interview data began. First, Ros’s Phase 1 and 2 interviews were analysed separately, then a cross interview analysis occurred. The process was also followed with Susan’s interview data.
Due to the rich nature of the interview data, the decision was taken to code manually. This included using a basic coding process of thematic, manual coding to identify and summarise segments of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This was done by colour-coding sections of text. The following thematic codes were assigned during this basic coding, generated by the data itself: roles of participants; relationships and interactions between participants; formative assessment practices; assessment criteria and standards; formative assessment purposes in Year 12 English; formative understandings; and other possibilities for formative assessment. As can be seen in Table 6 these codes were broad, but were related to the purpose of the interviews to present teachers’ accounts of formative assessment practices in Year 12 English classrooms. They were then examined for links and relationships, finally grouped under three main codes: the influence of contexts; practices; and purposes, as shown in Table 6.

A second pass of the data included the emergence and identification of sub-themes that were important to the description of the phenomenon of teachers’ formative assessment practices. The coding of these sub-themes was suggested by the data itself, with emphasis given to the inductive production of these codes. As can be seen in Table 6 these codes were more nuanced and fine-grained, enabling further categorisation and analysis of the data. Some segments of data were coded against more than one broad thematic code, and assigned more than one sub-theme code. The process of sorting codes included categorising interview segments into files grouped first under the broad thematic codes listed above, and then under the sub-theme codes. This process involved reading back and forth between files, and noting over-laps and connections. During this process, further explanatory notes were added to the files giving further information about the importance of sections of text. One such memo says “she talks about her goal of broadening students in a more specific way. This is her conceptualisation of formative assessment. What she achieved in the unit was the preparation for summative assessment” (Memo Ros,1,70).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Thematic codes</th>
<th>Sub-theme codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The influence of contexts | - System context  
- School context  
- Classroom context | Authoritative others  
School documents  
Classroom documents  
System documents  
Summative focus  
Formative focus  
Informing relationships  
Relationships between teachers  
Role of parents  
Feedback sources  
Student focus on grades  
System focus on grades  
Accountability  
Feedback to teacher  
Roles of others from outside classroom |
| Purposes | - Formative assessment purposes in Year 12 English  
- Understandings of formative assessment purposes  
- Other possible purposes for formative assessment | Formative process  
Formative feedback  
Improvement  
Achievement  
Formative/Summative relationship  
Links to summative assessment production  
Links to summative assessment purposes  
School Work Program (SWP)  
Syllabus  
Increasing independence  
Grades |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Thematic codes</th>
<th>Sub-theme codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>• Formative assessment practices</td>
<td>Role of teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Practices with assessment criteria and standards</td>
<td>Role of student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Roles of participants</td>
<td>Dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationships and interactions between participants</td>
<td>Increasing independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback modes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer- and self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marks (grades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Summative assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rough drafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation for summative assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluative expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Homework tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher use of artefacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment criteria and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student use of criteria and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-generated criteria and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exemplars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Modelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Groups of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Artefacts.** The artefacts were analysed in two ways. First, they were matched to interview segments that made reference to them and their function in the classroom. Second, each document was analysed to establish its particular contribution to the reported formative assessment practices and what it revealed about the teacher’s
understanding of the purpose of formative assessment. Different tools were needed for each document and these were established during the on-going analysis. Table 7 indicates the analytic tools used as well as the purpose of the analysis. For example, the SWPs were analysed to identify and examine each statement that was made about formative assessment. These were compared both with Syllabus statements about formative assessment and the relevant teacher’s practices to determine what was similar, different and whether any specific advice was provided by each school to teachers about the expectations of formative assessment practice in that site. The teacher-generated criteria and standards were compared with the official criteria and standards and the self-assessment checklists for the same summative assessment piece to determine the nature of the connections between and across the materials. Teacher feedback on rough draft items was also analysed against the teacher’s reported formative feedback practices and against teachers’ accounts of the improvement purposes of their feedback, including improving summative assessment grades, if such a connection was reported as a feature of practice. The scope of the artefact analysis is detailed in Table 7.
### Table 7

**Analysis Tools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis tool</th>
<th>Purpose of analysis</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categorisation of formative feedback on rough drafts</td>
<td>To examine the teachers’ formative feedback on rough drafts against their own definitions about feedback, as well as Sadler’s categories (1989) of the feedback of experienced teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log of formative assessment practices</td>
<td>To examine the range of formative assessment strategies revealed through talk, and assessment artefacts. Included a focus on mode of assessment piece, mode of feedback, interactions, artefacts, feedback, timing, and the actions of the teacher/student. Categories of formative assessment strategies identified.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison table including formative assessment</td>
<td>To examine the understandings about formative assessment provided in the SWP. These were matched against the teachers’ reported practices.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understandings made available in the SWP and teachers’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reported practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison table of teacher-generated criteria and</td>
<td>To map the points of convergence between the different representations of criteria and standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standards against the assessment criteria and standards,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summative assessment checklist and teacher talk about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>features of quality performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison table of criteria and standards from another</td>
<td>To map the points of convergence between the different representations of criteria and standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site against the assessment criteria and standards and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher talk about features of quality performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison table of Year 11 and Year 12 summative</td>
<td>To examine whether there is one-to-one correspondence between Year 11 and Year 12 summative assessment pieces</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment pieces (taken from the SWP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final stage of analysis.** As previously discussed, the rich data provided by the interviews was supported by the artefacts, which were analysed both relative to what was said about them, as well as for what they revealed about the teachers’ actual practices of
formative assessment. In this way, the artefacts have dual purposes in the study. The final stage of the analysis brought these data sets together, reflecting on teacher talk, as well as their artefacts, with the discussion in each case occurring under three broad organising themes: the influence of contexts; purposes; and classroom assessment practices and social interactions. The cross participant analysis included a process of comparing and contrasting coded segments of text under the three broad organising themes and using the analysis tools listed in Table 7.

There is overlap between the thematic threads of the literature review and the broad organising themes of the cases. The case reports carry forward the issues identified in the literature review, examining how they relate to the practices of the teachers in their particular settings. The two cases are presented separately: Case report 1 in Chapter 5; and Case report 2 in Chapter 6.

**Reflections and key insights.** Chapter 7 synthesises the key findings from the case reports and key messages from the critical review of literature to present reflections on the case reports. It also reflects on unmet affordances of the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland system. Drawn from the reflections in Chapter 7, Chapter 8 provides key insights into teachers’ formative assessment practices in their Year 12 classrooms in Queensland and presents implications and recommendations.
Chapter 5: Case Report 1

An Introduction to the Case Reports

Chapters 5 and 6 present case reports of experienced Senior English teachers in Queensland. Both have been given pseudonyms. The first teacher, known as Ros, worked at a non-government secondary college in regional Queensland. The second, Susan, was teaching at a state secondary school in regional Queensland at the time the study was undertaken. The two cases are considered separately with Case report 1 presented in Chapter 5, and Case report 2 presented in Chapter 6.

The analyses presented in the case reports involved an iterative process that drew on the review of literature, which brought to light unresolved issues relating to contexts, formative assessment purposes, and practices and social interactions. The case reports have been presented in such a way as to carry forward these issues and to examine how they relate to situated practices in different settings. A reflection on the two case studies is presented in Chapter 7.

Each case report is organised into four parts: Part 1 – Influence of contexts; Part 2 – Purposes; Part 3 – Classroom assessment practices and social interactions. Key findings of each case are then presented in Part 4. In each report the discussion of contextual influences provides an insight into the situated nature of each teacher’s assessment practices in her Year 12 English classroom as they attend to system and school requirements. Against this understanding of the external influences on practices, the discussion of purposes highlights each teacher’s understanding of the function of formative assessment in their classroom. The discussion of the nature of each teacher’s assessment practices is built upon the two earlier parts of each chapter, presenting the range of assessment practices each teacher employs through interactions with students and the manner in which formative assessment functions in their classroom.
Case Report 1

This chapter examines Ros’s account of her formative assessment practices. Analyses presented in this case report are based on the transcripts of semi-structured interviews with Ros and a range of formative assessment artefacts she brought to these interviews. These artefacts include: unit plans; class handouts; summative assessment tasks and accompanying task specific assessment criteria and standards sheets; exemplars of formative feedback on student rough drafts; the School Work Program; exemplars of ‘A’ standard work; exemplars of genres used in classroom discussions; unit overviews; and a criteria sheet for spoken presentation skill development activities.

Part 1 - Influence of Contexts

The analysis of Ros’s talk and related curriculum and assessment materials show that her formative assessment practices occur in interrelated contexts: system, school and classroom. These contexts and the social interactions that occur within them influence the decisions she takes about formative assessment, and the nature and function of formative assessment in her classroom.

Four main influences from these contexts emerge. First is Ros’s stated view of her role as teacher. Second, interactions outside of the classroom in both system and school contexts influence her formative assessment practices. Third, she practises formative assessment in her classroom influenced by the top-down delivery of school-interpreted policy. Parents influence her formative feedback practices, with the input of parents in formative assessment legitimated in the school and at system level.

Ros’s understanding of her role as teacher. Ros’s formative assessment practices are shaped by the role she reports taking in the classroom. Her description of this role provides two central images of the teaching and assessing work she does: as focussed on students for the purpose of maximising their “potential”; and as a “filtering device” for student understandings. Ros’s use of these images during her interview allows an insight into the manner in which she approaches formative assessment in her classroom and will be revisited throughout the chapter.

Ros sees herself as both “developing, maximising the potential of these young people to communicate when they go out to take up their places in the community” and operating in a learning environment where the focus is on maximising potential (Interview 2: 6,12). Ros’s goal for the students is focused on their acquisition of
communication skills they will require when leaving school, including a broader goal of preparing them for “dealing with life”. Elsewhere, it is indicated that students and parents view teaching, learning and assessment as “maximisation” expressed in terms of achievement measured in summative assessment grades.

Ros defines her role thus:

126. T13 “So, I don’t think it is just my role to give out task sheets and assess, I think it’s my role to, um, teach them so that they can perform to the best of their ability when they do those assessment pieces”. (Interview 1)

Here, she separates her teaching role from a focus on summative assessment, but embeds it in the preparation of summative assessment pieces and maximising potential in relation to achievement for summative assessment tasks. This has repercussions for what constitutes improvement evidence in this school, and in her classroom.

Ros uses the term “filtering device” to describe the role she plays in classroom discussions where students maintain their reliance on her by seeking her feedback, in preference to the feedback of their peers. This image is a useful device for examining Ros’s formative assessment practices. Through her reports of these practices, it becomes clear that she has a filtering role, translating and mediating knowledge about concepts and interpreting key assessment documents for students.

Ros’s account of her role in the classroom indicates that it is historical, built on her teaching experiences and experiences as an assessor. She began teaching Senior English over 30 years ago and has taught in the state and non-government school sectors, including a short period of time in another Australian state. She taught adults in the technical and further education sector, known as TAFE, an experience she described as requiring her to draw “on a lot of the same tools that I would have used in Senior English” (1, 6). She characterises teaching, therefore, as practised in ways that are common across education sectors and subjects and she is readily able to call on her prior assessment experiences to inform her practice.

Ros also identifies her prior experiences as a learner as influential on the manner in which she approaches formative assessment with her own students:

13Transcription abbreviations used: T = teacher; R = Researcher. Given the lengthy interview transcripts, each spoken turn was numbered to facilitate the organisation of data analysis. This talk segment is from the Phase 1 interview with Ros. It was response number 126, spoken by Ros.
and my own learning style has to has to dictate as well because... if someone comes in and says to me “I want you to do XYZ” but they don’t tell me what’s expected or show me a model, or, you know, give me training in how to do XYZ and I’ve never done XYZ before-

I’m not very happy about that. I feel enormously threatened and, you know, I might, I mean, it happens and, you know, you struggle through but it’s not my preferred way of doing it so I suppose for me, maybe more than other teachers, I-I grapple constantly with a need for more formative. (Interview 1)

Throughout her talk, Ros returns to the idea that she gives priority to formative assessment in her practices. In this talk segment it can be seen that she describes her own reliance as a learner on models, exemplars and explicit teaching of writing or speaking for particular tasks. Her experiences as a learner, teacher and assessor influence how she chooses formative assessment methods, the phases of her unit of work and her interactions with students.

**Interactions outside the classroom: system and school.** Of interest is the way in which Ros is influenced strongly by system and school contexts. She acknowledges the accountability requirements of the system itself in relation to certification and reporting for Year 12 students, as well as the strong influence of the school and classroom contexts in which she meets these accountability requirements. In these interrelated contexts, Ros interacts with system requirements and with authoritative representatives of that system: staff in the QSA; members of the District and State Review Panels through the feedback provided to the school; and the key Senior English policy document—the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b). In the school context, interactions occur between Ros, the English Subject Coordinator, teaching colleagues and parents. These interactions are influenced by key school documents including the School Work Program (SWP) as stated in Chapter 2.

**The system context.** Ros views herself as part of a system that prioritises summative assessment for grading and certification purposes. This system influences how she is able to practise formative assessment and the role formative assessment plays in relation to summative assessment. In her talk she foregrounds notions of accountability and responsibility:

… I guess it is the product of working a particular program (2) in a-in a structure where we are required to produce school assessment tasks to meet (1) the standards (3) of the QSA. So you’re, um, (1) you’re very conscious of the fact, as the students are, that Year 12 is the business end of their education, um, you have to get down to tin-tacks and tin-tacks is about doing
the best you can on these assignment task sheets. So, you-you know, (2) it has to be that way and-and, now where did I get that information from, um, (2) as I said, the Work Program, the system, (1) experience (4) my understanding of-of what I have a responsibility (1) to do. (Interview 1)

In this talk excerpt, Ros can be heard describing the influence of others, from system and school contexts, on her understanding of formative assessment in this high-stakes year of schooling. Ros gives priority here to the influence of the QSA and its requirements, widening this at another point in the interviews to include the main policy document, the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b), and the District and State Review Panels. The word “responsibility” links to notions of accountability to external others for certification and reporting. Responsibility also relates to her role in the improvement of student achievement, assisting students to do the best they can in terms of achievement on summative assessment tasks.

Ros’s view that the focus on summative assessment “has to be that way” has connotations of inflexibility and a fixed process that is recognised by all participants in the system. She nominates two important dimensions of this process: meeting the standards of the QSA, taken here to refer to the defined Exit Levels of Achievement outlined in the Syllabus (see appendix A) as well as the standards of summative assessment pieces associated with validity and reliability; and the need to meet Syllabus requirements for assessing the requisite number of summative assessment pieces and mandated aspects of the course.

Ros reveals that she is also held accountable to the District and State Review Panels for providing evidence in the form of student work folios as part of the Year 12 verification process, outlined earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 2. This influences her work in two ways. First, she reports that students’ summative assessment pieces, once graded, are unable to be used for formative purposes as they are stored securely as part of the school’s preparation for external moderation processes. Second, the Review Panel directly influences formative assessment processes in the schools through its feedback, which, in turn, shapes summative assessment. Specifically, this includes assessment task specifications and accompanying task-specific assessment criteria and standards, key assessment documents produced by the school:

184. T The Subject Co-ordinator writes them in Senior School and obviously writes them to the demands of the Syllabus and the demands of the Panel. *(in relation to an examination question written by Ros)* …he had made it a little bit more convoluted. He said the Panel will want it this way. (Interview 2)
The use of the word “demands” has connotations of power relationships between the school and the Review Panel. The Subject Co-ordinator interprets and mediates information about summative assessment tasks from the Review Panel to Ros, in keeping with the responsibility he holds for meeting Panel requirements. As outlined in Chapter 2, the District Review and State Panels are responsible for the approval of SWPs and this process includes providing feedback to schools on the suitability of their Programs. The reference here is to system requirements strongly influencing the assessment practices adopted at the school and classroom levels.

**The school context.** Interactions with the Subject Coordinator, her teacher colleagues, SWP, and parents strongly influence Ros’s formative assessment practices. Ros indicates that she complies with the SWP, particularly in relation to its course overview and key assessment documents including summative assessment task sheets and accompanying assessment criteria and standards. Despite the influence of the SWP on her formative assessment understandings, mentioned earlier, Ros reveals that she had not contributed to writing the program and describes the flow of policy information as “top down in the sense of…our work program and task sheets. They’re given for feedback, but generally fairly late in the day” (Interview 1, 42). The Subject Coordinator retains authority over the design of assessment tasks and accompanying standards specifications.

Ros does not see herself as being in a community of assessors at the school and reports that she works alone in providing formative assessment opportunities in her classroom for students. She views her use of formative assessment practices as different from those of other teachers, as indicated here:

288. T I suppose for me, maybe more than other teachers, I-I grapple constantly with a need for more formative. (Interview 1)

Relative to what she sees as the systemic emphasis on summative assessment, Ros describes a gap between her attitudes towards formative assessment and those of her colleagues. This distance is a recurring theme in Ros’s interviews. She states that she has agency in her classroom to make teaching decisions, declaring that “within certain parameters I do my own thing” (Interview 1, 44-46). This autonomy, [doing] “my own thing”, relates to pedagogical and formative decisions, but the parameters she refers to influence her formative assessment practices. For example, Ros states that she is unable to use the assessment criteria and standards with students because of language difficulties.
She questions the language used in the “complex” assessment criteria and standards, as constructed by the Subject Co-ordinator, and the complexity of assessment tasks, understood to be mandated by the Syllabus and included in the SWP.

St. Catherine’s SWP (2003) provides more detail than the Syllabus about formative assessment including: a clear demarcation between Year 11 for formative assessment purposes and Year 12, summative assessment purposes, and an emphasis on decreasing feedback and increasing independence. This is in keeping with the Syllabus’s (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 44) stated requirement that the SWP “contains more detail than the syllabus and caters for the special characteristics of the individual school and its students”. At St. Catherine’s this includes a course overview, which prescribes the formative assessment feedback opportunities that will be provided in relation to summative assessment tasks in terms of numbers of drafts and the nature of feedback. Ros provides feedback in accordance with the specifications of the course overview in relation to the numbers of drafts that she accepts from students.

Parents. School policy, in the form of the SWP, legitimates the input of parents in formative assessment at St. Catherine’s College. As noted earlier, the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) describes two roles for parents: as the recipients of assessment information, both formative and summative; and as a possible source of formative feedback as one of the groups of human resources that students are able to access in the preparation of many summative assessment pieces.

As mentioned earlier, St. Catherine’s is a non-government, fee-paying secondary college that creates expectations in teacher/parent relationships. The SWP formalises a role for parents as contributors to assessment pieces:

Parents and staff at St. Catherine’s College are partners in the students’ language development. This partnership is fostered through parents’ active involvement in:

- advising students, on occasions, in the preparation and redrafting of written and oral assessment. (St. Catherine’s College, 2003, p. 5)

This description of the partnership between parents and teachers serves to invite parents’ active involvement in the understanding that there is a partnership between the school and parents as described. The parents’ role is their active involvement in advising students on the preparation and drafting of assessment pieces. A parameter is provided, that this involvement is restricted to occurring “on occasions”. However, this frequency is not quantified.
Ros indicates that the primary concern of parents is summative assessment for grades, mentioned above, a concern she associates with all parties who have a stake in Senior English: “everything is wrapped up in that. Parental expectations, school expectations…students, everything…is to do with that” (Interview 1, 434). It follows, therefore, that Ros’s formative assessment practices are also “wrapped up in that”. The influence parents have on Ros’s formative assessment practices is taken up in more detail later in the chapter.

The classroom context. While Ros must comply with system and school requirements in her classroom, the data reveals that she has some freedom to decide on the nature of the formative assessment practices she employs in the context of her Senior English classroom. The classroom context and Ros’s formative assessment practices are discussed later in this chapter.

Part 2 - Purposes

Ros identifies four main purposes for formative assessment. Formative and summative assessment purposes are demarcated in terms of the purposes to which they are put, and in terms of their timing in Years 11 and 12 respectively. Formative assessment has an improvement function in relation to summative assessment tasks measured by grades. It is necessary for students to engage in the whole formative assessment process in order for incremental or significant improvement to occur. Graded summative assessment pieces do not have a further formative assessment purpose.

Demarcation of formative and summative assessment purposes. For Ros, formative assessment and summative assessment are clearly demarcated in terms of the purposes to which they are put. More specifically, the timing of formative assessment is determined by its purpose in relation to summative assessment. She identifies that primarily formative assessment has a rehearsal purpose in the course:

120. T With the formal assessment in Year 11 which is, of course, formative. It’s the opportunity for them to practise what they will be using in Year 12 to determine their capability in Senior English so, I taught Year 11 for a couple of years when I first went back there and, you know, it’s—it’s a really important year for that reason. In Year 12 I’m afraid I think assessment really is just, you know, the pressure is on, to-to get them to perform really well and to gain that measure. (Interview 1)

Ros adopts the understanding that formative assessment occurs in rehearsal of summative assessment, with the demarcation between the two being the distinction between Year 11
and Year 12. In effect, there are year level boundaries or demarcations that directly influence her formative assessment practices. Ros indicates that the understanding that formative assessment occurs during Year 12 is not widely held:

146. R ... would you ever say in the course of conversation [with colleagues] that you do formative assessment with your Year 12 students. Would you actually use the term?

147. T Probably not, no. I have said, I think I’ve said, I don’t know whether I’ve used the word formative, but I know I’ve said, well I’ve-I’ve got my kids doing this and then they’re modelling

148. R So you talk about the formative processes

149. T Um-um but they may not use the terminology, yeah. (Interview 2)

While Ros acknowledges here that formative assessment is not a term applied by her colleagues to practices in Year 12, it is evident that she makes provision for formative assessment as part of her classroom practices during units of work. Her discussion of her practices indicates that Year 12 end-point, terminal summative assessment occurs at the end, or some other pivotal point of the units studied over the year.

In keeping with the understanding that Year 11 assessment is rehearsal for Year 12, the analysis of the summative assessment tasks for Year 11 and Year 12 drawn from the SWP revealed one-to-one correspondence of text types to be examined, with text types examined in both year levels, as seen in Table 8 (St. Catherine’s College, 2003). For example, the text type of written imaginative text occurs at the beginning of semester one, Year 11, assessed in the genre of short story. It is revisited at the beginning of semester four, Year 12, where it is assessed as fiction, or script. While the genres are not replicated exactly across the two year levels, the skills and knowledges needed to produce both are linked. In this way, Year 11 tasks at St. Catherine’s College do provide rehearsal opportunities and opportunities for students to build the skills required to complete Year 12 assessment items. The SWP describes continuity between units of work across the two year course. One unit is described as building on a previous unit “in its exploration of how issues and experiences are stored and experienced in texts” (St. Catherine’s College, 2003, p. 32). There is a direct link to assessment as “students have opportunities to develop skills with genres they have used before, but with more conscious awareness and for more complex purposes” (p. 32).

Ros’s talk emphasises the view that she uses formative assessment in Year 12 English exclusively in the service of summative assessment, declaring that “formative assessment is something that I use in Year 12 to prepare for summative” (Interview 1,276) during units of work. This is in keeping with her emphasis on maximising student
potential, the interpretation of this by students and parents to mean grades for summative assessment, and the emphasis in her formative assessment practices on summative assessment production. She is focused, therefore, towards a particular goal:

68. T I mean I was happy in Term 1 because my kids were very well pre-prepared in the sense that they had drafts in, you know, they were ready for the assignment task, you know, they-they, um-they weren’t rushing it at the end which I don’t think is good. (Interview 1)

Ros associates quality teaching with achieving *summative assessment readiness*. From the description above, this involves planning the timing of formative assessment relative to summative assessment due dates. It also involves both Ros and students in the production and preparation of summative assessment pieces, with an emphasis on the production of drafts for feedback.
Table 8

**Summative Assessment Tasks Across Years 11 and 12 (St. Catherine’s College, 2003)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks occurring: Semester 1 of two year Senior English course – Year 11</th>
<th>Tasks: Number (signifies order in which they are submitted); text types; genres</th>
<th>Tasks: Number (listed out of submission order, but relative to corresponding tasks completed in Year 11); text types; genres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 1 Written imaginative text - short story</td>
<td>Task 5 Written imaginative text – fiction or script</td>
<td>Task 5 Written imaginative text – fiction or script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2 Written public text – Biography</td>
<td>Task 2 Written public text – Feature article</td>
<td>Task 2 Written public text – Feature article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 3 Spoken public text - Radio discussion or TV interview</td>
<td>Task 1 Spoken/signed expository text – Persuasive speech or portion of scripted and recorded documentary</td>
<td>Task 1 Spoken/signed expository text – Persuasive speech or portion of scripted and recorded documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 4 Written Analytic exposition - film analysis</td>
<td>Task 3 Written analytical exposition- Exposition; analysis of background research to reading of novel</td>
<td>Task 3 Written analytical exposition- Exposition; analysis of background research to reading of novel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks occurring: Semester 2 of two year Senior English course – Year 11</th>
<th>Tasks: Number (signifies order in which they are submitted); text types; genres</th>
<th>Tasks: Number (listed out of submission order, but relative to corresponding tasks completed in Year 11); text types; genres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 5 Spoken/signed imaginative text - dramatic recreation of play script</td>
<td>Task 6 Spoken/signed imaginative text – Dramatic recreation</td>
<td>Task 6 Spoken/signed imaginative text – Dramatic recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 6 Written expository text- written analytical exposition (in response to novels and poems)</td>
<td>Task 4 Written analytic exposition – Analytic exposition in response to literature</td>
<td>Task 4 Written analytic exposition – Analytic exposition in response to literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 7 Spoken/signed or hypertext expository - Analysis of representations of cultural assumptions</td>
<td>Task 7 Spoken/signed expository text – analytical exposition</td>
<td>Task 7 Spoken/signed expository text – analytical exposition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across Semesters 3 and 4 of two year Senior English Course in the order from 1 to 7—Year 12
Formative assessment and improvement. Ros prioritises student improvement, described as “maximising their potential” through formative assessment, but reports that improvement is measured by students in terms of summative assessment grades. In this extract she explains the place of learning in the preparation of summative assessment:

58. T … we seemed to put all our energy into this assessment task and learning occurs and development occurs but I feel there needs to be more.
59. R So is the learning and the development then occurring in relation to the [task?
60. T due to the task] um, only. Well, I like to think not particularly, I mean, I always introduce this unit we did last term by saying this is a life skill, you know, being able to recognise that people are using the tools of persuasion on you is something you need in all avenues of your life so I would like to think that they were learning something but I fear that they’re programmed into-into they, um, sort of, themselves, rate results more. (Interview 1)

Ros can be heard linking learning, development and achievement here, stating a preference for a greater focus on learning and development outside of summative task preparation. However, she reports that her students are not concerned primarily with learning. In her view summative assessment grades are all-important to students. Despite this, Ros gives weight to the portability of skills and knowledges, requiring students to first rehearse their skills in formative activities in class and then to use these in relation to the final summative assessment pieces. This portability also applies to the development of skills useful outside the classroom, described as life skills above.

Ros describes formative practices that she is not able to enact due to time constraints in preparing for summative assessment pieces:

80. T Um, yeah, I think so. I guess I-I’d like to if-if I had the-the time (1) and I was looking aft-and I was in charge of the program but, you know, other staff mightn’t like that but I would have us all, we would have a booklet if we didn’t have text book chapter that would say, you know, have certain exercises and–and, um, the skill building and knowledge building tasks which I would regard as being formative practices…
82. T … that were stepping us through what we needed to do (1) to be able to complete the summative assessment (2) in a more structured fashion. (Interview 1)

Formative assessment can be read here as the broader building of knowledge and skills. Consistent with Ros’s claim that she does achieve summative assessment readiness, she requires a systematic approach to formative assessment, and envisages the use of a booklet to support this approach. The skills and knowledges she refers to are not extra, or unrelated to those necessary to complete summative assessment tasks. Ros describes one formative activity where she encouraged students to read an article from a major
newspaper every week to build, in particular, their vocabulary (Interview 1, 392). However, this was not a formal requirement of students, and did not attract her feedback. This activity does not fit, therefore, with her description of improvement through engagement with the “whole formative process” emphasising her feedback on students’ individual work.

Ros’s description of the purposes of formative assessment above reveals a tension between her perception that students and parents focus on grades, the identified system focus on panel procedures and the emphasis on summative assessment, discussed earlier, and her view that more learning and development should occur. Her description shows that she has to manage both compliance issues and ‘client’ issues, given her position in a school where parents pay school fees.

The “whole formative process”. Ros makes two statements about the conditions for improvement through formative assessment and the measure of improvement possible for her students. First, she links improvement to student engagement with on-going formative feedback from her. The student who improves does so through a series of actions:

154. T A person who takes advantage of the whole process of formative assessment, you know, be it just drafts, does their homework, comes to the teacher and discusses it they’ve got to improve, I think, or at least maintain [their grade level]. (Interview 2)

Ros makes improvement contingent upon two factors: the actions of students in entering into the “whole process” of formative assessment; and entering into interactions designed to elicit teacher feedback. While the whole process here includes drafts, homework and the discussion with Ros, she takes a wider formative approach than the elements listed here.

Second, Ros reports that the formative process can lead to three possible measures of improvement, expressed in terms of summative assessment grades described as achievement levels: the maintenance of student grade levels across assessment pieces; small-scale incremental movement within some levels of achievement; and significant improvement in particular circumstances. As indicated in Chapter 2, exit standards in Year 12 English range from Very High Achievement (VHA) to Very Limited Achievement (VLA). Individual assessment items in Year 12 are graded as A (the highest level) to E (the lowest level). Items graded at ‘A’ level meet the task specific standards drawn from the VHA exit standards. Ros describes student improvement as symbolised in
grades expressed using the item standards ‘A’–‘E’. Such letter grades are only defined within school documents. That is, they do not appear in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b).

Ros describes improvement limits as follows:

151.  

Ros identifies improvement from a ‘B+’ to an ‘A’- as more difficult than incremental improvements at lower achievement levels. She sees such grade improvement as evidence that other factors sit outside of the influence of formative assessment and feedback, outside of what can be taught and outside of her control. Crossing this threshold is related to the “issue of flair and fluency” and Ros subscribes to the idea that individual students have particular ability levels. Students characterised as ‘A’ level students have what she describes as “the gift” of writing and the necessary maturity to write at an ‘A’ level.

Larger-scale improvement is described by Ros as possible where students dramatically increase their efforts and enter into “the process” of formative assessment. She sees this type of improvement occurring when students who have previously “never ever applied themselves” (Interview 2,153) take steps to redress this situation themselves.

**Graded summative assessment pieces: no further formative assessment purposes.** While Ros gives great emphasis to the provision of formative assessment opportunities in her classroom, she reports that she does not use graded summative assessment pieces for formative purposes associated with the improvement of further learning in any systematic way. She makes strong claims that formal assessment pieces
occurring at the end of units of work, and designated summative by Ros and her colleagues, are used to collectively determine overall attainment. She reports that there is no feedforward from summative assessment pieces for the improvement of individual students in subsequent units. This is in contrast with system expectations as described in Chapter 2, where all assessment is to be used for formative purposes before being used for summative purposes.

Ros makes it clear that there is no systematic, focused dual use of the grades and accompanying feedback statements on these graded pieces:

196. T This [a summative assessment piece] goes in a folder with your name on it, and next time you go to write an essay, you don’t even have a copy of this beside you. If I was doing it I’d like, now what was it I did wrong on that last assignment. Oh heavens above, it’s, I’ve stuffed it up. It seems to me these should be formative as well. I’m just-I’m just saying that I think the summative pieces should be formative in that a student should have their last piece of summative beside them when they’re doing their next piece of summative so the mistakes they made in the last piece they don’t make again. But as the system is, they go into a folder in case they get lost because they’ve got to go to Panel and if Panel don’t get them all we’re in deep doggy doo. So their educational value to learn from their mistakes is lost. (Interview 2)

For Ros, the system of storing graded summative assessment pieces, complete with her written feedback, means that there is no opportunity for students to benefit from looking at their “mistakes” to improve the performance on their next piece of summative assessment. Ros defines this as an important part of the learning process, but these documents are held by Ros and her teacher colleagues and regarded as “high security documents” (Interview 1, 466).

This practice is different from the focus in the SWP’s course overview for Semester 4 (St. Catherine’s College, 2003) that makes a clear statement that students have the opportunity to reflect on their learning across the two years of the course. There is, therefore, the official expectation that students are to be provided with opportunities to enable them to reflect on previous units of work and assessment pieces. The summative assessment task sheets provide a structure for this feedforward to occur. The teacher’s comment section has two headings: strengths; and what you can do to improve (see Figure 6). The expectation that these comments will inform students’ future work is clear.
Part 3 - Classroom Assessment Practices and Social Interactions

The analysis of Ros’s accounts also identified two emphases in her descriptions of her formative assessment practices in the classroom context, which are discussed here as separate, detailed sections. The first is on the nature and function of her practices in the classroom. The second is on Ros’s role and the role of her students in formative assessment, and the social interactions that occur as part of her formative assessment routines.

The nature and function of Ros’s formative assessment practices: pedagogy and formative assessment. The provision of teacher feedback is the central tenet of Ros’s formative assessment work and she links her feedback directly to grade improvement. Ros’s pedagogical routines include a strong focus on formative opportunities to receive her feedback. She plans pedagogy which functions as formative assessment so that her pedagogical routines are intertwined with her formative assessment routines. Ros times formative assessment opportunities associated with her feedback to occur throughout a unit of work:

79. **T** I say the opportunity is there, um, so there-there are, you know, little ways along the journey that they can certainly get clarification for what it is that they’re-they don’t understand what they are trying to do or if there is something wrong in your writing … (Interview 2)

Ros describes “little ways” through which students can interact with her to gain feedback. The notion of “clarification” denotes a process where students come to her for clarity about two things: for the purpose of clarifying task requirements; and for feedback on draft pieces indicating what can be corrected in a piece of writing. Ros’s feedback practices are examined against her stance that quality formative assessment involves formative feedback from teacher to students throughout a unit.

Routinised formative assessment: phases and practices. Ros does not employ diagnostic or formative assessment strategies to inform her immediate planning and teaching in the beginning of a unit. Instead, each unit is informed by her knowledge of curriculum demands outlined in the SWP’s course overview, the formal assessment outlined in the unit’s task specifications and task-specific assessment criteria and standards, and her understanding of pedagogy in subject English. Ros does not indicate that she gathers formative information about her students before beginning planning. She
starts instead with an understanding of curriculum, in particular of the summative task that needs to be produced, the demands of the unit described in detail in the SWP and the detail about the task made available in the summative task specifications sheet (Appendix G). She also begins with knowledge of what students must do to meet the summative task demands of Senior English, her understanding of the pedagogy associated with meeting these demands, and with considerable experience as an assessor in this or similar summative assessment tasks.

As shown in Figure 4, Ros implements four routinised unit phases identified during the analyses of the data, emphasising movement through various feedback opportunities and focused towards the end result of summative assessment production: 1) Initiating; 2) Content knowledge and skills development and improvement; 3) Summative assessment product improvement; and 4) Closing. Within these phases, Ros employs routines she sees as “emerging” throughout a unit of work. Across the phases within each unit, she employs planned formative assessment activities as well as interactive formative assessment that occur as part of the teaching and learning routines.

One of the key differences between the phases is the extent to which opportunities exist for formative assessment feedback between Ros and her students. Phases 1 and 4, the initiating and closing phases of the unit do not routinely feature opportunities for feedback for further improvement from Ros to her students. In Phase 1 Ros “sells the unit” to students. While normal classroom discussion during this process would allow questions and answers for clarification, Ros’s focus is on information dissemination and not on formative feedback opportunities.

Phase 4 includes the return of graded summative assessment pieces with written feedback to be included in students’ work folios. Student profiles are updated progressively as graded summative assessment pieces are returned. As discussed earlier Ros reports that this feedback has no obvious or systematic formative function associated with the use of feedback to feed forward information for improvement purposes.

Phases 2 and 3 are intensive work development phases and there is breadth to Ros’s feedback responses and interactions with students across them. These phases and the categories of formative assessment practices that occur within them are discussed in detail below. Through the examination of Ros’s accounts of her practices a number of different categories of formative assessment practices can be identified, predominantly occurring in Phases 2 and 3. The categories arising from Ros’s reported formative assessment practices during the content knowledge and skills development and
improvement phase were grouped as follows: homework rehearsal of skills; whole-class rehearsal of skills through activities associated with text deconstruction and genre construction; teacher-directed deconstruction and discussion of ‘A’ standard exemplars; and feedback from peers on formative skills activities for spoken performances. The categories identifiable in the summative assessment product improvement phase were grouped as follows: conferencing between Ros and individual students; and Ros’s written and accompanying verbal feedback on rough drafts of individuals’ summative assessment pieces. The movement from category to category is linear in the sense that Ros moves the students through them towards summative assessment production. The categories do not stand alone but are interconnected, linked by Ros’s goal of summative assessment readiness. Elaboration on these categories is woven throughout the following discussion of the two intensive work phases of the unit and the emphasis on roles in formative assessment.
Figure 4. Unit phases highlighting formative feedback opportunities during unit of work.
Phase 2: content knowledge and skills development and improvement. Ros’s formative assessment practices are evidence of the downward pressure of summative assessment on learning in Ros’s classroom. It is understood that content knowledge about focus texts and key concepts underpins the production of summative assessment pieces and all activities in this phase of the unit are used to develop content knowledge and skills students need to produce the summative task/s. The focus is on an improved understanding of the knowledge and skills through written feedback to individuals, and through verbal feedback to small groups and the whole class. In Phase 2 Ros plans formative assessment opportunities based on students preparing individual and group responses to handouts and models. Formative feedback is provided through discussions between Ros and groups, and Ros and the whole class. This is a regular feature of her Senior English classroom work. This phase also includes the homework items discussed previously.

Homework tasks have a clear formative purpose:

130. T As, if I, particularly if I set homework tasks I see that as formative and if they don’t do it, um, they’re missing the opportunity to have that practice, to find out if they want to ask me anything about it…

Students’ homework tasks allow them opportunities to rehearse and receive Ros’s feedback on the knowledge and skills required to produce summative assessment pieces for grading. Ros reports that homework tasks attract her written feedback, with additional verbal feedback where students choose to access it, but are not themselves assigned a grade or mark.

Whole-class rehearsal of skills activities associated with analysing materials for study and writing and speaking activities provide opportunities for verbal feedback from Ros to the whole class and small groups. For example, when teaching a unit on feature articles, Ros requires students to examine a model of persuasive writing and deconstruct its salient features. Ros reports that this begins with a focus on individuals’ ideas:

129. T … usually they do it as an individual simply because I like everybody to think. Then I’ll put them maybe into groups to discuss their answers before we then like in a plenary session go through the whole lot, um …I-I prefer that people look at it, even if they take 5 minutes first but I like them to get some answers down…because I don’t like the idea that some kids won’t process it. (Interview 2)

In this way, the ideas of individuals feed into group and whole-class discussions. Through this process students receive feedback from their peers in a small-group setting, as well as
whole-class. Ros provides feedback through the whole-class discussion. As discussed earlier, Ros’s students maintain their dependence on her feedback during these activities:

133. T … but it’s amazing how they tend to direct everything towards you. You know, just as when they do an oral presentation, I mean I’ve actually been known to do this (covers her face with a piece of paper) so they’ll stop looking at me, but they direct it to you, you know.

As can be heard in Ros’s talk, students view her as a pivotal part of classroom discussions directing their responses to her. She goes on to describe her role as that of a filtering device, as all questions and answers go through her, and she filters information in and out of the discussion.

Assessment artefacts and interpretation and mediation of expected quality: the use of assessment criteria and standards. Ros’s approach to expected quality and the criteria for performance is a process of mediation and interpretation. She reports that students have difficulties accessing the assessment criteria and standards authored by the Subject Coordinator:

253. R So, would you ever put these in front of them in class, the criteria and standards?
254. T Um. Well, in the sense that when I give out a task sheet.
256. T I tend not to go through them every time [each unit of work] because they switch off, they just don’t engage. Suddenly, you’ve got a room full of blank faces (2) and bear in mind, that they’ve been having one of these since Grade 8. It’s got more complex and complicated as they’ve gone along… (Interview 1)

As can be seen in this talk segment, despite the students being given what is referred to as “an assessment criteria and standards sheet” at the beginning of each unit of work, Ros does not incorporate talk of the official criteria and standards in her teaching. This is the case even though these are to be used for judging the quality of their work and awarding a final grade. Students are therefore at a distance from the official criteria and standards, a distance that may preclude students from accessing them for formative assessment purposes, independently of Ros. Elsewhere she asserts that students are interested only in the task sheet that “gives them the things that they absolutely have to do in order to do this” (Interview 1, 402). According to Ros, students focus on the task description and “just have a vague thing in their head of just go for it and hope that it leads to that (criteria and standards)” (Interview 1, 402). Analysis of the summative assessment task sheets reveals that much supportive material is made available that
explicates the task itself, and provides detailed information about completing the task (see Appendix G). Students’ focus on the task, therefore, is supported in the documentation.

Ros’s practices include a focus on assessment artefacts through teacher-directed talk about expected quality. According to her account, the assessment criteria and standards frame her feedback on homework tasks, as well as the class activities she asks students to participate in as they develop and improve content knowledge and skills. Ros reports that she routinely distributes ‘A’ standard exemplars of written summative assessment tasks:

45. T Um. I’ll read it through, um, pointing out, it seems to be more teacher directed I suppose, pointing out what makes it a favourable piece of work. By then we would have, supposing it’s a feature article, um, we would have looked at the-the elements of the feature article so that then they can see, so I’ll sort of point those [out]. (Interview 2)

As described in this talk segment, there is some scope for students to develop evaluative expertise as Ros “points out” the qualities of a fine performance. However, students are reliant on the judgements made by Ros and elaborated through classroom discussions led by her in relation to ‘A’ standard written work. Limited emphasis is given to students using criteria and standards to create feedback statements and make judgements on written summative assessment task exemplars.

There are mode-specific differences in her practices relative to the development of evaluative expertise and assessment criteria and standards. In the case of spoken presentations students do not see full exemplars of student tasks, but Ros variously provides parts, or sections of similar spoken presentations that are taken to represent high level, or incompetent work. According to Ros’s reports, these are the only examples provided for students of non-‘A’ standard work. This indicates the different status of spoken assessment, associated with her reported inability to provide feedback on rehearsals of the summative assessment performance aspect of the task. Her submitted artefacts also included an example of alternative criteria and standards employed in a peer-assessment spoken activity that involved students making judgements according to criteria:

92. T Yeah, well-well, the-the idea is to feedback what-what is it that the person is trying to persuade you to do, the class has to tell them that. Um, the other thing they have to feedback is, did they fulfil the steps of the introductory, you know, orientation phase, and did they fulfil the steps of the conclusion.

93. R So you give them those clear criteria?

94. T Yeah.
That this is what they’re looking for?

Yeah. (Interview 2)

This is a rehearsal of skills activity and the criteria provided were generic criteria that Ros had used previously in another setting in a different sector (Figure 5). Ros reports that the use of this document for peer-assessment purposes is not a regular activity in her classroom, but she called on this particular document for this unit because she had found it useful in the past in another site. In this way understandings about quality are transferable across sites and sectors, from TAFE to St. Catherine’s Year 12 Senior English, and across assessment tasks. However, it is clear that the criteria used to develop students’ evaluative expertise during spoken activities, such as that presented in Figure 5, are not linked to the official assessment criteria: knowledge and control of texts in their contexts; knowledge and control of textual features; and knowledge and application of the constructedness of texts. Nor does this document reflect critical-cultural theory adopted in the Syllabus.

As can be seen, Ros requires students to make judgements against standards descriptors (excellent, above average, satisfactory, unsatisfactory) that do not correlate with the five assessment standards as expressed in the school’s assessment criteria and standards (A,B,C,D,E) or the Syllabus Exit Achievement Standards. The official standards therefore remain unarticulated for students. As explained by Ros, emphasis is given to the giving and receiving of feedback and of the opportunity to practise skills that would ultimately be used in the summative assessment piece at the end of the unit.

This departs from the understanding promoted in the Syllabus, as discussed in Chapter 2, which prioritises the use of official assessment criteria and standards derived from course general objectives with the purpose of promoting self-assessment skills and evaluative expertise in students. The Syllabus and SWP indicate that formative assessment is useful not only for the provision of feedback for students, but also for providing opportunities for students to “gain experience with task and genre-specific criteria and standards sheets and develop evaluative independence as they learn to evaluate their own work and identify ways to improve it” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 24). It further requires that “provision should be made for students to gain expertise in evaluating their own and others’ work” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 9). From the description of Ros’s practices above, it can be seen that the development of students’ evaluative expertise as described in the Syllabus cannot be fully realised as student access is restricted to a limited range of exemplars of written assessment pieces. It is also restricted
by Ros’s mediation of assessment criteria during teacher-led discussions of these exemplars.

**Figure 5.** Substitute criteria and standards for spoken formative activity.
Phase 3: summative assessment product improvement phase. In Phase 3 of the unit, Ros makes decisions during interactions with individual students to revisit and reinforce concepts and skills in order to improve summative assessment products. This occurs when the formative information she gathers reveals that she must take steps to redress gaps in student knowledge through further explanation or modelling in relation to summative assessment draft preparation. The emphasis is on the aims of the unit associated with summative assessment production.

Ros uses this information as the basis of interactions with the rest of the class:

79. T … and that’s where I find I might-I might talk with a couple of people and it-it emerges that they don’t know how to get into this thing, so then I’ll then go away and get something ready or at the time I might, you know, I’ll stop everybody and say just in case anyone else is confused about this, you know, here we go, um, and I know that there are-there’ll be a group of people in the room that have got it, they’re fine, they’re trying anyway, but just to clarify. (Interview 2)

It is evident, therefore, that Ros responds to individuals, taking the learning in a different direction, bringing the class back together, or gathering other materials to demonstrate a particular concept or skill. Her response involves altering the immediate direction of the lesson. She may engage students in a clarifying discussion, or prepare further materials and resources. This responsiveness is based on the formative assessment information she has received from individuals in her classroom, matched to and against the needs of all students in her classroom. This is consonant with the understanding in the Syllabus that teachers should teach the whole class, or small groups in response to difficulties revealed in student summative assessment drafts (QBSSSS, 2002b). It also reflects the understanding in the Syllabus that observations will be used for formative purposes associated with improvement.

For Ros, the production of written summative assessment drafts is a planned pedagogic activity with the primary purpose of providing teacher feedback on individual students’ drafts for improvement purposes. It is a key formative assessment activity in Ros’s reported repertoire of practices. Drafts are produced for written assessment items and scripts of spoken/signed assessment items. Both the Syllabus and the SWP acknowledge the drafting process and the receipt of teacher feedback as a key part of formative assessment in Year 12 English.

During this phase, Ros identifies an important pre-condition for formative interactions to occur:
Is all of the formative feedback dependent upon students actually doing something first?

Pretty much. Well, the only other way and-and that’s conferencing rather than formative -
is where someone would say oh, well I’m doing the issue of, um, drug abuse but I c-a-n’t think of any cultural assumptions, you know, I help get the ball rolling-

And that’s more at that planning stage?

Yeah, and I mean, I usually make it clear that I, unless it’s that situation, get something down that I can help you with, you know, get down, a draft, um, or something that-that I can start to see how your thinking’s going. (Interview 2)

The draft writing process includes two potential entry points for formative feedback from Ros: during her conferencing with individual students; and at rough draft marking. Ros can be heard here making the distinction that planning, or conferencing between herself and students prior to a product being in evidence is not a formative assessment activity. To constitute formative feedback, there must be a part-product, or some initial response.

However, it is evident that Ros’s interactions during conferencing with students promote improvement through a focusing of student’s ideas in the early stages of summative assessment preparation. Feedback loops are a feature of these interactions, as is the co-construction of strategies for beginning and continuing a task. This is acknowledged through the mechanism of the progress check (see Figure 6), included as part of the summative assessment task sheet, which provides a routine of formative assessment feedback on planning that is required of students. The English teacher of each Year 12 student is required to date and sign the document to certify that conferencing has occurred. The summative assessment task sheet in Figure 6 provides several pieces of information about the student’s performance of the task, some of which are evidence of the formative process: progress check, grade, teacher feedback, and the authentication process declaration. This recognises the role of formative assessment in summative assessment production. An examination of the set of Year 12 summative assessment task sheets reveals that progress checks are not used for all tasks.

As already discussed in Chapter 2, consultation is an assessment technique identified in the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) for teacher use “in both formative assessment and summative assessment...to provide students with valuable information about their language use” (p. 24). Ros uses consultation for formative purposes through conferencing and in giving feedback on summative assessment drafts, providing students with information for improvement of their summative assessment products. In this way, it
contributes to meeting summative assessment purposes, but is not used as a summative assessment technique or during summative assessment activities and does not contribute to verification requirements (QBSSSS, 2002b).

The discussion of the interview and artefact data here provides evidence that three techniques are used for formative purposes by Ros throughout her units of work: consultation, observation and textual analysis. Consistent with Syllabus expectations that the role of “focused textual analysis for summative purposes [is that it] contributes to the requirements for verification” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 24) the evidence for verification of Ros’s Year 12 students therefore comes from focused textual analysis in the form of graded written and spoken/signed tasks that are collected in student portfolios, referred to as student folios in Queensland.
ASSESSMENT ITEM 5: WRITTEN EXPOSITORY TEXT: ANALYTICAL EXPOSITION
12 English
Semester 2, 2008
Unit: Representing and Misrepresenting: Our Times, Other Times
Length: 800-1000 words
Draft Due: Start of Week 6
Date Due: Week beginning 27th August (Week 7)
Name _______________________________ Teacher: __________

PROGRESS SHEET
Subject of your research: Child abuse & how it has affected Heathcliff’s behaviour.

Teacher’s Signature: ___________________________ Date: 28/08/08

OVERALL ASSESSMENT
TEACHER’S COMMENTS

A-

Well done.

Strengths: Excellent and relevant research. Reference to the novel reflects depth in understanding & analysis.

Comments on reader interpretation successfully integrated.

What you can do to improve: A further need for careful editing is apparent in parts of your essay. The fluency of your writing is impaired at times.

AUTHENTICATION

Cite material resources you accessed in your bibliography and in text references.

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STUDENT CHECKLIST

Tick relevant boxes

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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I did not receive significant help in producing my final copy, from another student, an electronic source, a teacher and/or another adult. Signed: __________ Signature of student

Figure 6. Completed summative task sheet (Case report 1).14

14 This is a reproduction of the original document which was unable to be copied clearly.
**Rough draft feedback characteristics.** With the clear focus on summative assessment for grades in Year 12 already identified, it follows that Ros’s feedback on rough drafts emphasises evaluation of the summative assessment draft and suggestions for its improvement. She explains here that her feedback is reactive to expectations from parents, and that it takes on certain characteristics as a result:

134 T … when it’s, when you’re marking an essay, (1) um, what I have found increasingly and with pressure from home, so what I’ve started to do on my drafts now is to, as well as, you know, giving copious feedback, um, about whether, largely it comes down to (1) whether they’re on task with what they’ve done …

136. T … and whether, where they require more-further editing, (2) part of which is proof reading, but most kids think proof reading is editing and that-that requires a lot of, you know, it’s not just about fixing up spelling, you know, but reading whole sentences and paragraphs, and that sort of stuff, and improving vocab. (Interview 1)

Ros reports that she provides “copious feedback”. The exemplars of her rough draft marking show that the feedback tends towards certain types of advice: whether the student is “on task”, or fulfilling the requirements of the assessment piece; and whether more editing is required. She describes elsewhere a third characteristic, where her feedback provides indications of where improvements could be made by the student (Interview 1,140).

Ros’s formative feedback on three summative rough drafts was analysed against her self-report: two written summative assessment pieces (samples one and two); and the written draft script of a spoken presentation (sample three). Using Ros’s terms above, the samples feature evaluative comments that indicate features that add or detract from high quality, providing information about whether the student is “on task”: “Great piece of research on abuse and how it relates to the novel”; and “However, at this stage you have not integrated how research positions the reader. How it challenges/supports their response” (see Figure 7). Through these comments Ros directs the improvement process: Needs more in the body; Use shock and emotive language, plus statistics, etc.; Really use guilt – there is a responsibility to help those in need. Why?
Ros’s evaluative comments on summative assessment drafts include references to concepts and terms that have some connection to the official assessment criteria. As can be seen in Table 9, Ros’s evaluative comments can be mapped against the task requirements outlined in the task sheet, and the three official assessment criteria: knowledge and control of texts in their contexts; knowledge and control of textual features; and knowledge and application of the constructedness of texts. The explicitness of the match refers to the extent to which the comment could be identified as encapsulating the relevant criterion as it appeared in the task sheet (explicit), or whether it is an element of the criteria (not explicit), interpreted by Ros. In keeping with her concerns about the complex language of the official assessment criteria her feedback does not use this language. It is aimed at providing students with information that suggests a way forward.

Ros identifies what informs her written feedback on formative homework tasks and rehearsals of practice examination questions thus:

226. **T** Probably largely driven by the fact that I know they’re going to do a piece of assessment at the end of it and whether or not they are meeting the criteria (1) for that particular assessment. (Interview 1)

She reports, therefore, that she uses formative assessment focused towards preparing students to meet summative assessment requirements. Her feedback on activities to develop and improve individuals’ skills is informed by her knowledge of the task and the application of the assessment criteria to the work at that point.
Table 9

*Feedback Comments – Exemplar 2*

<table>
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<th>Comments</th>
<th>Relationship to criteria</th>
<th>Relationship to task requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Great piece of research on abuse and how it relates to the novel</td>
<td>Criteria 1 and 2 – not explicit</td>
<td>Task requirements – explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, at this stage you have not integrated how research positions the reader</td>
<td>Criterion 3 – explicit</td>
<td>Task requirements – explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it challenges/ supports their response</td>
<td>Criterion 3 – not explicit</td>
<td>Task requirements – not explicit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The definition of editing provided by Ros above includes “reading whole sentences and paragraphs and that sort of stuff, and improving vocab”. It has a broader purpose than that of proof-reading, which she associates with “fixing up spelling”. Both processes are evident in her work. The analysis of the three samples indicates there is an emphasis on categorising some mistakes in the texts, identifying additional mistakes and correcting others. Of the 40 individual feedback entries across the sample, 27 of these categorise, identify, or correct grammatical and spelling errors in the text. Textual errors are therefore a focus of the feedback process. The SWP advises that “feedback will be more at the level of cultural and critical literacies and construction of texts rather than specific help with correcting textual features” (2003, pp. 26, 33, 40) in the final semester of Year 11 (semester 2) and the two semesters of Year 12 (semesters 3 and 4). The sample rough drafts analysed in this study were all produced in semester 4 and evidence a greater focus on textual errors than is encouraged in the SWP.

Ros provides a mark or grade range, expressed as an ‘A’-‘E’ level, clearly demonstrating her attempt at linking feedback and student achievement levels. Ros considers this grade to be an additional source of information on summative assessment drafts of written items. Her concern is to circumvent students’ misunderstanding of the role of feedback:

166. T The assumption was that if I fixed up all the errors that the teacher has pointed out, then I’ll have to be an A, because they didn’t get the depth of some comments that may have been, um, relating to their level of analysis or whatever it may have been. (Interview 2)
As expressed here, it is Ros’s intention that the grade or standard expressed as a letter grade will assist students and parents to understand the meaning of her feedback comments. Ros reports that students are able to look at the grade range given and identify this with the feedback that emphasises the errors the student has made and what is missing, or needs development in the piece. This gives “them an idea of where they are, with that idea of improvement” (Interview 1, 166). In this sense, students are not only dependent upon her feedback comments, which inform their next steps as they correct the identified errors, or shortfalls in performance, but also on her interim assessment as a form of feedback, presented as a letter grade. The grade together with Ros’s comments provide another opportunity for students to engage with standards through identifying them against their own work but, conversely, Ros needs to provide this extra advice because the students have limited experience with the range of standards.

**Mode-specific formative feedback practices.** Feedback is available to students in both written and verbal modes, but Ros prioritises written feedback associated with formal feedback opportunities and provides it on homework tasks and rough drafts. Verbal feedback has two purposes for Ros: to accompany and elaborate on written feedback; and during classroom discussions to respond to student questions and answers.

Ros’s formative feedback practices are different according to the mode of the summative assessment piece that is the culminating piece from each unit. The assessment of oracy is a feature of the English Senior Syllabus, but Ros’s feedback practices for spoken performances are different from those for written work:

88. T … I find oral drafts more difficult to, um, give feedback on in certain areas. It’s fine in the sense of yes you’ve achieved the task and-but you don’t look- you forget (1) about textual errors because it’s not going to count, because it’s the script and - so then the other side of it is it’s how they present it, you know, because sometimes on paper, you know they go through, it meets the requirements of the task, but in the presentation it can be really flat. (Interview 2)

Ros indicates that she cannot give feedback on the full range of criteria that are required of a spoken task. The written script accompanying a spoken presentation or dramatic performance is often not representative of the performance itself. The analysis of her marking exemplars for spoken presentation scripts indicates that she does not include a grade range for spoken performance written drafts. This is consistent with her view that the written draft of a spoken performance does not represent all aspects of the final performance.
Technology for formative purposes. While verbal feedback predominates during classroom discussions with small groups and in whole-class discussions, Ros prioritises written feedback to individuals on homework tasks and summative assessment drafts, using traditional pen and paper technology. She does not use electronic or digital technology for formative purposes for reasons associated with a lack of time. There is a silence around the use of interactive formative assessment software, or emails for providing feedback on rough drafts, or more broadly, technology to facilitate the use of summative assessment by students for formative purposes. Ros reports that the lack of time also precludes the use of audio-visual recordings of spoken presentation rehearsals for formative purposes including self-assessment and peer-assessment.

An emphasis on roles and social interactions. For Ros, the teacher has a necessary role providing formative feedback. A key concern is the extent of her role in students’ production of summative assessment pieces:

132. R   Um, very clearly, this current system, which I still marvel at in many ways, um, draft system of drafts as I say to them and they get two goes at it and they’ve absolutely got rocks in their head if they don’t get in a draft. I’ve never really been really clear in my head about how far we go in terms of how much we, input we give back with those drafts. (Interview 1)

There are two issues evident in Ros’s talk. The first is her description of the drafting process as enabling students to “get two goes” at securing her advice on their assessment pieces. The first “go” is the draft and the second is the submitted assessment piece for grading. Secondly, there is a clear personal dilemma involved around how much input should occur with drafts. She describes her uncertainty about the parameters of providing input into drafts and “how far we go” in providing feedback on drafts. Ros identifies the advantages to students in this system, but does not see the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) and Review Panel reports as providing clear parameters for drafting. As already discussed, Ros provides many opportunities for feedback to her students, but limits feedback on summative assessment to group and individual conferencing and one draft on summative assessment written items.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) provides the opportunity for students to complete assignments outside of the classroom in fully unsupervised conditions, accessing human and material resources including feedback. The contribution others can make in the production of summative assessment pieces is acknowledged in the production process. In Senior English the feedback of
teachers and others can contribute directly to the production of summative assessment pieces. The SWP (2003) provides a clarifying statement about the text production process:

However, virtually nobody works alone in the production of a final piece of work. We all use a range of human and other resources and need to acknowledge these. It is important to understand what is acceptable in this context and what is not. **In general, it is acceptable to seek help in the ideas, planning and early drafting stages, but not in the final stages of drafting or in production of your final version** [emphasis added]. (St. Catherine’s College, Appendix 5)

A clear role for others in the production of summative assessment pieces is defined, normalising this with the suggestion that “nobody works alone”. Ros emphasises her role in feedback and improvement, but indicates that the place of others in formative feedback is acknowledged through task authentication requirements:

194. T We have on the front of our task sheets authentication [indicates task sheet]
196. T … and these are the other possible avenues and if they’re [students are] being honest they tick off. (Interview 1)

In this way she acknowledges the role of others in providing formative assessment. The inference seems to be that students may not always acknowledge the source of other assistance. Elsewhere Ros reports that many students at St. Catherine’s College have hired tutors. The input of these tutors is uncertain. Summative assessment text production processes at St. Catherine’s involve students documenting the help they receive in the preparation of summative assessment pieces, in keeping with the Syllabus sample outlined in Chapter 2 (see Figure 1). As can be seen in Figure 8 below, it involves the teacher in documenting particular aspects of the task and the student in documenting the actual sources of assistance at different phases in the production process. Emphasis is given to authentication of text production in relation to the feedback from and input of others. This documentation is included as part of the summative assessment task specification and is handed in with the student’s work submitted for grading.
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Authentication</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Print copy</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Achieved required length?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I did not receive significant help in producing my final copy, from another student, an electronic source, a teacher and/or another adult.

Signed: ________________________

Figure 8. Documenting the text production process (St. Catherine’s College, 2003).

As can be seen in the earlier statement from the SWP, guidance is provided as to the stage at which assistance must be withdrawn in those assessment pieces used for determining an overall grade on course completion: after feedback on planning, the building of ideas, and the early drafting stages of a piece. According to Ros and in keeping with the rough draft examples she provided for this study (see excerpt: Figure 7), when summative assessment pieces are produced as assignments with full access to human and other resources, students are able to submit a draft, receive feedback and make adjustments in line with this feedback straight into a final version to be submitted as the summative assessment piece. In this sense, students’ summative assessment pieces could
be seen to be co-produced by Ros and students, so that her input into students’ work is legitimated within the school-based system itself. As shown in Figure 8, above, students are required to declare that they “did not receive significant help in producing my [the] final copy, from another student, an electronic source, a teacher and/or another adult”. The final copy, therefore, is viewed as the work of the student.

Ros provided five summative assessment task specifications, or sheets with completed assessment items. Each task sheet included a completed authentication of the text production process box, as used above. Of the five students who completed these boxes, four declared that they received input from the teacher at the drafting stage of text production, but from no other source. Two of these students acknowledged the input of other students their own age at the ideas and planning stage. Of the five, only one included a declaration that the student had received assistance from a family member or students her own age at the draft stage of text production. This student was also the only student to document assistance received from the Librarian during the ideas and planning stage.

Table 10 outlines the range of conditions of tasks in Year 12 English at St. Catherine’s College and indicates that of the possible four written assessment pieces, two are produced under assignment conditions, with students accessing teacher feedback on the final draft before the production of a summative assessment piece for submission. A third is an examination essay answering an unseen question and the fourth an examination essay answering a question students have seen prior to the examination. In both examination types, the questions are produced by the school and not by an external body. Students are routinely able to bring prepared notes into the examination room where the question is known prior to the examination. In preparation for this type of examination, rough drafts can be produced but the summative assessment piece for grading is to be produced under examination conditions within the teacher’s supervision in the classroom at a designated time. This means that not all summative assessment items attract the same type and extent of feedback.
Table 10

Conditions of Summative Assessment Tasks in Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Opportunity for teacher feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 – first semester</td>
<td>Spoken/signed expository persuasive speech</td>
<td>Opportunities for consultation with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written public text: feature article</td>
<td>Assignment conditions; opportunities for consultation; teacher will comment on one draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written analytical exposition: analysis of background research contributing to reading of novel</td>
<td>Assignment conditions; opportunities for consultation with the teacher; teacher will comment on one draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written analytical exposition in response to literature</td>
<td>Unseen question; test conditions; limited access to resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 – second semester</td>
<td>Written imaginative text: fiction or script</td>
<td>Assignment conditions; opportunities for consultation with the teacher; teacher will comment on one draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spoken/signed imaginative text: dramatic recreation</td>
<td>Opportunities for prior consultation with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spoken/signed expository: analytical exposition</td>
<td>Opportunities for consultation with teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the Phase 1 interview, Ros indicated that she agreed with system expectations, made clear in both the SWP and the Syllabus, that students should become increasingly independent of her feedback for improvement in Year 12. However, she reported that students may not actively take steps to self-evaluate due to their narrow focus on the production of summative assessment pieces for grading, as previously discussed. In her view students deliberately maintain their dependence on her:

450. T Yeah, I have some concerns about that. Yeah, I mean that’s, no, hang on, I can’t generalise, better students obviously do [self-edit] but if you’ve got a
system that says you can get someone to check it for you, you’re mad if you
don’t, so maybe (2) it develops independence in self-editing to a point. (Interview 1)

For the so-called “better” students who already have the skills of self-editing, it is not
necessary to develop these skills. In Ros’s view, those who are not capable of self-editing
will not develop those skills, preferring instead to rely on her feedback, as legitimated by
the system itself. Access to her feedback reduces the likelihood that students will self-
edit.

Ros reports parents to be solely concerned with student achievement represented
by summative grades. In her experience parents subscribe to ideas about student
dependence on her feedback and hold her accountable for students’ English summative
assessment results. In Ros’s view, this is reflected in the attitudes of both parents and
students to the role of students in improving their own work:
151. R They don’t see any role for the student (1) to self-edit, to self-evaluate?
152. T Well (2), no. (Interview 1)

The evaluative, editing role, therefore, must fall to Ros who reports that the perception of
those involved in the formative process, and others, such as parents, is that students
should not routinely engage with self-editing and self-evaluating. The cycle of
dependence is therefore confirmed from outside of the classroom.

In Ros’s view, parents share student expectations that her formative feedback role
is to correct and draw attention to errors on draft summative assessment pieces:
156. T … in a sense, I think, um, this is just a gut feeling, a personal opinion, that
(1) the expectation is becoming more, at the drafting stage, you’re almost
like the hired tutor (1) who many students have, that (1) you, you know,
your job is to (1) fix this up so they get an A. (Interview 1)

In this talk segment, Ros can be heard describing her role as being “almost like the hired
tutor” responsible for “fixing” the summative assessment rough drafts so that the student
can receive the highest possible grade. In her view parents associate her feedback with
significant improvement measured in achievement levels. An essential part of the process
of student achievement, in this interpretation, is her correction of student work with the
feedback/review process viewed as one-way. The student’s role is therefore to ensure
their submitted summative assessment pieces reflect her corrections.

This description of parents and students’ views of Ros’s continuing pivotal role in
student improvement is quite different from the strong policy focus on increasing
independence across the two-year Senior English course. As indicated in Chapter 2, the
Syllabus gives weight to the development of students’ self-monitoring skills, and the SWP reiterates this emphasis. The Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) makes a clear link between teacher modelling and the organising principle of increasing independence, advocating that students should gain expertise in evaluating their work and the work of others through “teacher modelling of writing and speaking/signing processes including revision and editing; and explicit teaching of textual features in context” (p. 9).

Ros anticipates that students may gain self-evaluative skills through observing and participating in her feedback and modelling processes, but their focus on achievement as measured in grades may circumvent this. When asked her view on the Syllabus advice (QBSSSS, 2002b) that formative assessment “enables students and teachers to identify the students’ strengths or weaknesses so the students may improve their achievement and better manage their own learning” (p. 21), Ros responded:

448. T I would agree, “the strengths and weaknesses to improve their achievement”. Um, technically better manage their own learning because if they see this as a step that is helping them, you know, this is step A to help them to get to step C, um, then-and they appreciate the relevance of-of step A, then they can see the sequential process that’s helping them with their own learning but as I said to you already, I’m not sure that students see that because they only see it-they just want (taps desk referring to task and criteria and standards sheets) achievement here. And, um, homework tasks which we all call formative they regard as secondary to the priority in their time management of getting assignments done. (Interview 1)

The identification of strengths and weaknesses for improvement is a key part of Ros’s feedback processes. In Ros’s view, student management of learning is not a priority for the students themselves, with priority given instead to the production of assessment items with achievement expressed in terms of grades. The focus on the production of draft summative assessment pieces by students results in their valuing certain formative activities over others. It follows, therefore, that they give less priority to the rehearsal of summative assessment component skills and more to the preparation of draft versions of summative assessment pieces for her feedback. As indicated in Ros’s talk, above, students do not make a connection between rehearsal of particular skills and improvement. This view that students may gain these skills from experiencing her feedback contrasts with her earlier stated position that students do not self-evaluate. It is in conflict with her reported reluctance to provide them with a range of evaluative experiences and train them to self-assess.
Ros reports that inconsistent messages are presented by the school about increasing independence, with drafts accepted for feedback comments in the final semester of Year 12. This is referred to in the SWP (St. Catherine’s College, 2003), with the direction that “it would be expected that students would receive less assistance in the final assignments than for other assignments” (p. 40). After attending a QSA workshop, Ros returned with a perception that in the final semester of Year 12:

154. T … students shouldn’t be conferencing and there shouldn’t be drafting occurring because by then, they should have the maturity in their work to self-edit and, you know, they should just be giving you the finished product. (Interview 1)

This segment of Ros’s talk reveals her view that maturity and developmental readiness are contributing factors in students’ ability to self-edit. As discussed previously, she associates this maturity in students’ work with personal traits as opposed to the systematic development of students’ self-editing and self-evaluation skills.

**Peer- and self-assessment.** Ros indicates that peer-assessment occurs informally and irregularly in class, but she does not routinely include peer-assessment on summative assessment drafts. In keeping with her stated view that she has a central role in providing feedback, peer feedback is not a feature of Ros’s classroom, as seen in the passage below:

418. T … that oral task they would have done it there, the odd group work situation that arises where I’ll get them to write responses and then they get together and-and compare. Um (2) formally, no. (Interview 1)

Ros’s reference to the “odd group work situation” categorises peer-assessment as occurring as part of pedagogical strategies and not universally through all units. The peer-assessment opportunities described do not produce written feedback and do not therefore fit with Ros’s idea of formative assessment as providing written feedback on student work. The reference to the oral (spoken) task above is to the classroom activities used for students to practise spoken skills. Ros’s categories of reported formative assessment practices do not include feedback on full rehearsals of spoken presentations.

Ros does not generally provide opportunities for peer feedback on written summative assessment drafts. One exception to this was her reported use of an ‘A-’ standard exemplar of a current student to model the process of improvement from ‘A-’ to ‘A’ standard. This does constitute a form of peer-assessment for it provides feedback about improvement through classroom discussion, but has the larger purpose of
developing shared understandings about the improvement process. The receipt of feedback is restricted to the student whose work is being examined.

Ros does not regularly make available opportunities for students to self-assess in her Year 12 classroom. This is in keeping with her stated understandings, already explored in this chapter, that in this high-stakes year of their schooling, students and parents do not expect students to self-assess, and further that the language employed in the assessment criteria and standards is too difficult to use with students. For her, quality formative assessment involves feedback from teacher to students throughout a unit of work.

While she recounts that she has used self-assessment activities involving recording student rehearsals of spoken presentations in a previous system in which she worked, the perceived time pressures in Year 12 English reduce the possibilities for self-assessment:

432. T: No, I haven’t done it, um. Well, it’s probably, I wouldn’t say it’s not a possibility, it’s probably that I haven’t tried hard enough to-to move the mountain but I’d also say, um, time is just incredible. (Interview 1)

Ros can be heard associating the lack of self-assessment opportunities with the pressure of system requirements. For this reason she does not regularly include planned or formal self- and peer-assessment activities, but does include informal discussions between peers of their work. While Ros does not present opportunities in class for students to provide input in a formal way, Figure 6 shows that the student who completed the sample task specification sheet acknowledged the input of other students at the ideas and planning stage of summative assessment text production. This informal input was considered by the student to be sufficient as to warrant documentation.

**Individuals’ access to formative feedback.** Ros’s talk indicates that she provides equitable opportunities for individuals across the Year 12 cohort, based on providing multiple feedback opportunities for individual students. She does not report any significant differences in the behaviour of groups of students. During the interviews, Ros initially described her classroom as predominantly homogeneous, with different learning needs at a minimum. However, she went on to identify three distinct groups of students who sit outside of this description: “designated” students who can access learning support; students disadvantaged by social and emotional difficulties associated with family dysfunction; and boys. The first group is assisted financially to access learning
support staff available in the school. The statistics provided in the SWP (St. Catherine’s College, 2003) show that 3 per cent of the students have English as a second or other language, and between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of the students “receive additional assistance because of disabilities or learning difficulties” (p. 3). The latter takes the form of access to the Learning Support Teacher and teacher aide assistance where appropriate. Ros does not see it as her role to make accommodations for learners in the form of alternative materials, tasks or activities in her classroom, but provides multiple opportunities for individual feedback to students through a unit of work. Ros makes no mention of providing particular formative assessment opportunities for students with ESL backgrounds.

Ros indicates that the second group of students has difficulties becoming involved in classroom activities because the changeable nature of their living arrangements means they did not always have access to the resources necessary:

36. T Yeah, they come today and they’ll start writing up and then tomorrow, no, they haven’t got it, um, so it-it’s very-very difficult to help them with-with formative stuff as well for that reason. (Interview 2)

Lack of regular access to their written work meant that the “normal” Ros-student formative feedback dependence was unable to be realised. Ros does not report the need to consider other methods of accessing student work to overcome this, for example electronic or on-line resources.

Ros characterises the third group as making choices about accessing formative assessment opportunities differently:

79. T … but for the most part, a lot of boys, a lot of football boys, and, um, a lot of boys who, you know, kind of be the last thing on their mind, probably, kind of thing particularly English homework. (Interview 2)

In this description Ros identifies that “a lot” of boys, and in particular “football boys”, choose not to take up formative assessment homework tasks. In this way, access to formative assessment is a choice for students, but one that she considers is influenced along gender lines. Ros does not report offering other formative assessment opportunities specifically for boys generally, or for particular sub-groups such as “football boys”.

Part 4 - Key Findings of Case Report 1

Six key findings have been identified from the case data and analysis presented in this part of the chapter. The focus on Ros’s account of her formative assessment practices revealed her understanding of the purpose of formative assessment practice through a
discussion of her formative assessment practices in the classroom. The three main headings of the chapter are used as organisers to this discussion: The influence of contexts; purposes; and classroom assessment practices and social interactions. The six key findings are presented and elaborated on in turn in this, Part 4 of the chapter. For organisational purposes, key findings are in italics.

**The influence of contexts.** Ros’s formative assessment practices are directly influenced by social interactions that occur in the three interrelated contexts: system, school and classroom. She ultimately makes decisions about formative assessment practices based on her own experiences, but within the parameters determined externally to her classroom through these interactions. She therefore practises formative assessment under the influence of a range of others. Ros operates at the interface of system, St. Catherine’s school and classroom contexts. Her boundary-crossing behaviour is complex. She has attended QSA Senior English Syllabus training, and has read and is conversant with the assessment requirements of the Syllabus. She boundary-crosses between school and system contexts in these ways but her authority does not extend to making decisions about school assessment tasks and related criteria and standards. Therefore her boundary-crossing in the system context is limited. A clear line of influence has been identified from system to school, through the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) and the SWP, involving the Subject Coordinator. Ros does clearly cross between the boundaries of school and classroom contexts, described in her practices below, as she responds to system demands by practising formative assessment in ways that meet system requirements, while also responding to the assessment requirements of the school and specific to her classroom.

Social interactions in the three contexts are therefore influential to different degrees: Ros’s interactions with the system are restricted to QSA Syllabus training workshops, and her familiarity with the Syllabus, as described above. Interactions with the Subject Coordinator and teaching colleagues are more influential. An indirect interaction occurs with the Review Panel, which has authority over the Subject Coordinator in his formulation of “complex” assessment documents. Ros reports that Review Panel processes in the school result in summative assessment pieces being for terminal or grading purposes, and not used for further formative purposes.

Her practices in relation to the use of summative assessment for formative purposes, and working with documents that conform to policy requirements are regulated
through the school’s relationships with the QSA and its moderation mechanism, the District Review Panel. The latter influences her practices through its feedback to the school on assessment task sheets as well as the school’s response to the security of Review Panel verification and moderation samples.

Another reported influence is that of parents, whose role in the school is acknowledged in the SWP. Ros reports her interactions with parents as they question teacher judgements and formative assessment feedback relative to grades ultimately awarded on summative assessment pieces. In her view, parents take the position that teacher feedback should enable students to make significant improvements in students’ summative assessment products. Ros therefore makes decisions about feedback on summative rough drafts relative to her perception of what parents understand of her role, and the role of the student in improvement. The restrictions afforded by what she identifies as a strong focus on summative assessment in the system context is mirrored in the school context, where she describes parents and students as being singly focused on summative assessment grades.

As indicated in Chapter 1, in this study the classroom is discussed as a separate context: the pedagogical context. While it is closely interrelated to the school context it provides another set of distinctive influences on Ros’s practices. It is in the classroom context that formative assessment interactions for improvement occur. System and school intersect with Ros’s experiences as a teacher and assessor to influence her formative assessment practices. Ros’s formative assessment practices occur against the background of her history as teacher and assessor in various school and system contexts. Her understanding of her teaching role is formed through these experiences and underpins her practices and practice decisions. It influences her response to system and school requirements, the artefacts she uses in class, the nature and function of the formative assessment practices she chooses to enact, and the understandings she has of the purpose of formative assessment.

*Ros engages with policy in the form of the Syllabus document, and the SWP, but reports that she has no authority to influence education policy implementation within the school. Moreover, she reports the need to be compliant with the SWP.* She is knowledgeable about the formative assessment demands of both, and of the influence these documents have on her practices. Opportunities for her to influence education policy implementation are constrained by the English Subject Area Coordinator’s interpretation of system requirements.
She reports a strong responsibility to act in accordance with the course overview provided in this document, and the use of key assessment documents, including the defined assessment criteria and standards and task sheets. She understands this to be her role in meeting system and school requirements. In addition, she reports that she is autonomous for what she teaches and how she teaches it in her classroom. However, this relationship between pedagogy, formative assessment and accountability is complex and there is clear evidence that this autonomy is constrained by system and school requirements, including the assessment criteria and standards. The autonomy reveals itself in the choice she makes not to engage students with the assessment criteria and standards, or to develop students’ self-assessment skills.

**Purposes.** Ros prioritises formative assessment for improvement, with evidence of improvement in Year 12 classrooms measured in terms of summative assessment grades. This is in keeping with the summative assessment focus of students, parents and the system. Her practices do have a learning and development focus, but this is primarily oriented towards summative assessment production and an associated grade focus. She prioritises summative assessment readiness, and associates this with quality teaching in this system. This is a source of tension for Ros who would like to prioritise learning above the summative assessment focus. She accounts for this by giving weight to the portability of skills and knowledges, requiring students to rehearse skills required in the unit’s summative assessment piece, but focused on different topics and/or texts to that which would be assessed in that piece. Her clear focus on multiple formative feedback opportunities addresses this agenda. She asserts that all students are capable of either incremental improvement or significant improvement dependent on their engagement with all available formative assessment opportunities, their natural ability and their past attitude to the subject.

**Classroom assessment practices and social interactions.** The analysis of Ros’s formative assessment routines indicates that there is no hard boundary between pedagogy and formative assessment. She incorporates formative feedback into pedagogical strategies used in the classroom. Her practices are pedagogical routines in that they include teaching strategies she uses often, and formative in that the categories of practice include an emphasis on formative information gained through social interactions. Ros describes the formative assessment routines she employs as “emerging” throughout a
unit of work, but there are broad routinised phases in her units of work: content knowledge and skills development and improvement; and summative product improvement. Both phases prioritise Ros’s formative feedback.

Ros reports that she provides formative feedback to individuals, small groups and the whole class in response to a number of classroom and formal assessment tasks timed throughout a unit of work. These range widely from the rehearsal of skills, in class activities examining texts or exemplars, against which Ros provides verbal feedback. They include the provision of formal written feedback on summative assessment drafts. Ros does provide formative assessment opportunities that are generally removed from the pedagogical strategies that characterise day-to-day teaching in the classroom. These include homework tasks that are set exclusively for formative purposes associated with providing feedback on the rehearsal of skills, meant ultimately to inform summative assessment products.

*Ros prioritises her feedback as central to the improvement process, with a focus on feedback on written drafts.* In retaining ownership in this way, she limits student self- and peer-assessment for increasing independence, or the contributory feedback of others. This restriction in modes means Ros reports the absence of digital media for formative assessment purposes, including the provision of feedback on-line.

Ros indicates that her responsibility is in her work as a translator and filtering device, making formative assessment opportunities available to maximise student potential. She maintains a central role in formative assessment, filtering and translating knowledge about assessment tasks and assessment criteria and standards through her feedback and maintaining the dependence of students on her feedback for improvement. Student agency in improvement is restricted. This is in keeping with Ros’s perception that students are reluctant to be agents in their own learning and instead rely on her feedback to improve their summative assessment products and grades. The active contribution of the students occurs only as they make decisions about taking up her “whole process” of formative assessment opportunities and adjust their work in accordance with her feedback. While it is possible that students come to understand the process of improvement through receiving teacher feedback, Ros anticipates that they do not independently emulate this process, prioritising instead improvement from teacher feedback.

*Ros has strongly-held views of her role in the classroom, the expectation of teachers and students, and the priority given to summative assessment procedures at*
system, school and classroom levels. These views influence the choices she makes about self-assessment and the systematic use of summative assessment pieces for formative assessment purposes associated with on-going improvement. This contradicts her stated view that she must comply with SWP requirements that clearly include a strong emphasis on developing students’ increasing independence, as discussed earlier. Students position themselves as dependent upon her feedback and assessment document interpretation. To this end they are informed by the teacher’s understanding of quality performance, mediated for the students by the teacher’s interpretation of the defined assessment criteria and standards.

Peer-assessment is not a feature of summative assessment production routines. While opportunities for peer-assessment exist in classroom tasks as part of group work, these are labelled by Ros as informal activities. In keeping with the students’ reliance on Ros’s knowledge of criteria and standards, no peer feedback is given on written summative assessment drafts for spoken and written performances.

In accordance with the SWP’s report of a relatively homogeneous student population, Ros does not discuss formative assessment strategies for diverse groups of students. Her description of her classroom reveals a lack of diversity in terms of English Second Language learners and students with learning difficulties. She responds to students’ individual needs by providing many opportunities for written feedback on individuals’ written homework, skills rehearsal pieces, as well as written feedback on written assessment drafts. Ros does not identify particular adjustments or strategies for students with identified learning needs. While she understands that certain groups will not take up all formative assessment opportunities, or that students who are not high-achievers will not automatically self-monitor and improve their own work, she does not develop formative assessment routines to address this inequality.

Chapter 5 has identified six key findings about Ros’s formative assessment practices. In the next chapter, Chapter 6, Case report 2 focuses on the formative assessment practices of a teacher known as Susan.
Chapter 6: Case Report 2

This chapter presents Susan’s account of how she practises formative assessment in her Senior English classroom. As mentioned earlier, analyses in this case report are based on transcripts of semi-structured interviews with Susan and a range of formative assessment artefacts she brought to the interviews. As outlined in Chapter 4, these included classroom planning and teaching artefacts such as unit plans, class handouts, Susan’s criteria and standards, exemplars of written formative assessment feedback on student rough drafts, exemplars of summative assessment pieces produced by past students, exemplars of genres set for study, and a checklist for self-assessment. Further to this, Susan made available school-produced artefacts including task sheets for summative assessment purposes, accompanying assessment criteria and standards specifications and the Plains State High School (hereafter Plains SHS) Senior English SWP (2004). As indicated in the introduction to the case reports, the discussion is organised so as to address key issues relating to contexts, formative assessment purposes, and practices and social interactions.

Part 1 - The Influence of Contexts

As with Ros, Susan’s formative assessment practices are enacted within three interrelated contexts: system, school and classroom. These contexts have different degrees of influence over the nature and function of her formative assessment practices. Susan’s account of her practices highlights the influence of each context.

Susan’s talk made clear how her understanding of her role as a teacher influences her formative assessment interactions with students. Interactions with others from outside her classroom, both from the school context (teaching colleagues and Head of Department (HOD)) and from the system context (policy-making bodies and their agents) shape how she made formative assessment opportunities available and the nature of those opportunities in Year 12 English. The pivotal nature of her formative assessment classroom interactions with students for improvement purposes in the classroom context are discussed later in this chapter.

Susan’s understanding of her role as a teacher. Susan’s understanding and enactment of formative assessment are tied closely to the role she perceives herself
playing as teacher in her classroom and the social interactions she encourages in her classroom with students:

2. T … I still see myself very much as, very much as the kind of controller of a classroom, whereas I realise the more modern model is of a facilitator, you know, a facilitator of learning, but I guess I see myself more as a classroom manager … like I’m delivering the information and then engaging them in activities which will enable them to grasp the concepts for them then to do something with whereas … I guess I see myself more as I’m the one who’s got the information to impart to you rather than it being a collaborative learning experience, more that I’m the expert and you’re the learner. (Interview 2)

In this talk segment, Susan takes a managerial position in the classroom, giving priority to information delivery and control functions. She describes an information and knowledge delivery model, centred around her role as the subject expert, with a focus on top-down interactions with students. Elsewhere she describes herself as “dispensing information”, suggesting that knowledge is a commodity to be passed on to students. This is commensurate with the primary role she maintains in the improvement of students’ written drafts of summative assessment pieces through her feedback. However, this account contrasts with her reported practices. While her account shows that she does mediate information and knowledge about assessment requirements for her students, the analysis of her reported practices indicates that she also frequently engages students in small-group and whole-class joint construction of knowledge through classroom discussions. Evidence of this will be presented in the discussion of Susan’s routinised formative assessment classroom practices.

Interactions outside the classroom: system and school. Groups and individuals from outside of the classroom, drawn from system and school contexts, have considerable influence over Susan’s assessment practices. The system context includes two groups that have positions of authority over teachers’ assessment practices in the high-stakes world of Year 12: the QSA and the Review Panels. While Susan’s school interacts predominantly with the District Review Panel for their geographic area, this Panel is overseen by the State Review Panel, as described in Chapter 2. Within the school context, Susan interacts with groups and individuals including the HOD and teaching colleagues.

The system context. Key to Susan’s relationships with the QSA and the District and State Review Panels is the handing down of assessment documents that influence formative assessment practices in schools. Susan has no direct relationship with these
Susan interprets the system as having a strong focus on summative assessment in Year 12 English and a focus on achievement as expressed in grades to be used for certification and reporting purposes. Susan indicates that her formative assessment practices are determined, in part, by the number of summative assessment pieces required to be completed in Year 12, as set out in the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b):

202. T I think that’s the general experience. Yeah. I mean there isn’t room when they’re asking for seven pieces of assessment by, you know, September. (Interview 1)

In Susan’s experience, all class time in Year 12 must be directed towards the development of skills necessary to produce summative assessment items, and then to the improvement of pieces to be submitted for summative assessment grading. The data further reveals that Susan strives to use formative assessment to improve students’ summative assessment pieces, and thus their summative assessment grades, in order to meet District and State Review Panel standards for student achievement at verification. In Susan’s expressed view, such a focus results in reduced opportunities for formative assessment for the purpose of learning improvement.

Susan describes the relationship between the District and State Review Panel and Plains SHS as unequal. She describes how the School’s need to meet Panel requirements ultimately influences: the way in which she provides students with feedback to enable them to reach or maintain a desired achievement level; and to which groups of students she makes available ‘extra’ feedback opportunities. This relationship also influences the construction of key assessment documents such as the SWP, summative assessment task specifications, and task-specific assessment criteria and standards. In Susan’s experience, the panel has an oversight function:

176. T ... when feedback comes back from panels, you know, you look at that and um and take that on board and um. I mean that’s of the greatest interest to us is what, I think, that’s the over-what do the panel want? What would panel expect from an A? And I know with our Head of Department here, he will often when we are talking about things, say, well the last feedback from Panel was blah blah blah so we need to make sure that we’re doing this. (Interview 1)

As can be seen here, meeting panel expectations for student achievement levels is a key consideration for Susan and her colleagues. Described as of “the greatest interest”, the school responds to Review Panel feedback and re-focuses or adjusts their practices accordingly.
**The school context.** Susan relies heavily on localised, shared versions of institutional understandings about Secondary English assessment, including formative assessment practices. Susan has not taught in other schools and depends upon her English HOD for informing her understanding of formative assessment in Year 12 English. In part, her formative assessment practices are influenced by the HOD-written course overview in the SWP, which describes the program of summative assessment to occur over the two year course. The Syllabus requires a minimum of six assessment items and a maximum of seven items be produced by Year 12 students before verification in October. It is of interest that students at Plains SHS are required to produce the maximum number of summative assessment items, as outlined in the SWP (2004). This may influence Susan’s capacity to provide time for formative assessment opportunities during her units of work.

The HOD has official authority over Susan through his position as her line manager. During her interviews Susan foregrounded shared understandings about assessment practices formed with other teachers. Her descriptions of her own practices frequently referenced the actions of the group, including the HOD and teaching colleagues:

42. **T** I guess we have certain expectations because we discuss as a, um, as a department, you know, what - what we are expecting from the task and I guess we are going on our expectations, um, of what we think, you know, an ‘A’ standard piece should include, um, because we sit down and work out as a department how we would expect the thing to be structured and what sort of information we would expect to be included … (Interview 1)

In this description, Susan’s understandings about tasks are formed through conversations with other department members in relation to planning for teaching and assessing student work. This applies to the marking of summative assessment pieces, but also has repercussions for the emphasis she gives to formative assessment as she assists students to produce the summative assessment pieces. Despite this emphasis on working in concert with her colleagues, Susan makes instructional decisions in relation to the provision of feedback on rough drafts that are outside of the parameters for increasing independence outlined in the SWP. This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

As was the case for Ros in her school, Susan was not involved in any continuing way with the development of Plains SHS SWP (2004). Her involvement was restricted to the English department’s initial discussions of Program:

16. **T** … we probably would have spent, you know two, two pupil free days where we, uh, together the English teachers, we’d get together in small groups to talk about and we’re sort of giving him I guess, giving the Head of
Department some input to the thing that he was finally writing. So we had some input but we’re not (1) we’re not doing the final kind of formulation. (Interview 1)

Susan’s input was limited to this group discussion. As described above, she played a minor part in the writing of the SWP. The HOD was responsible for the SWP in its final form and he constructed the task sheets and the task specific criteria and standards that make up the set of official materials to be used by teachers and students in this school for both formative and summative assessment purposes. Susan also reports that she was not involved with any further re-writing of subsequent versions of the SWP (approximately 2006) or any of the assessment documents it contained. While Susan further describes the process of writing programs for Junior English as “a collaborative kind of thing with the department”, this is not the case for Senior English. The top down managerial model of information dispenser that characterises Susan’s perception of her role as teacher, discussed earlier, finds parallels in the relationship she has with her HOD.

Her use of the Syllabus and SWP is limited:

39. R So what materials do you use to inform your assessment practices? Do you ever look at the syllabus, do you look at the work program?

40. T Um, probably no. If I’m honest. (Interview 1)

As indicated in this talk segment, Susan does not routinely refer to the Syllabus in her practice. This is not unexpected given that the external system of school-based assessment in Queensland promotes the use of the SWP as the guide for teacher practice in each Senior Schooling Subject. Susan’s pre-service teacher training pre-dated the 2002 English Senior Syllabus. Her experience as a teacher and assessor of Year 12 English is restricted to Plains SHS where she has worked for a period of some 10 years. She reports that she had no other access to training in relation to the Syllabus. It was established during the Phase 1 interview that she was not a District or State Review Panel member required to have a working knowledge of the Syllabus for approving SWPs and examining schools’ verification and moderation submissions. Her understandings of official assessment expectations, therefore, are established and maintained in this school context.
Parents. In contrast with Ros, Susan does not report that parents influence her formative assessment practices. Susan reports two triggers for discussion of assessment with parents: the non-submission of summative assessment pieces, resulting in contact from the school to ensure parents are aware that course requirements are not being met; and parent/teacher interviews. Susan indicates that parent/teacher interviews in Year 12 are focused singly on summative assessment achievement levels:

133. R  For example, at a parent/teacher interview would you ever say anything about the formative assessment process that they’re going through, how they’re going, or is it just going to be about … their summative marks?

134. T  Yeah, I think the summative stuff, the focus is all on the summative, yeah the formative isn’t particularly … the focus is just on the assessment work. (Interview 2)

This talk segment indicates that summative marks for end of unit assessment items are given priority in parent/teacher discussions. It is common for teachers to use student folios to report on students’ progress towards summative achievement during parent/teacher interviews. While the discussion of summative marks could have a quasi-formative purpose in that this form of feedback makes parents aware of shortfalls in student performance, Susan does not identify this. Priority is given by both Susan and her students’ parents to student achievement as measured by summative assessment grades in Senior English.

The classroom context. As the analysis of Susan’s talk has made clear, her reported understanding of the purposes and practices of formative assessment is formed in her school context under the influence of the HOD and in discussion with her teaching colleagues. The system context provides parameters for practice and these are conveyed to her through others. In the practice context of her classroom, Susan is free to decide on the nature and function of the formative assessment practices she enacts with her students, but these practices reflect the influence of school and system contexts. The discussion of her formative assessment practices later in the chapter provides insights into the classroom context.

Part 2 - Purposes

Susan demarcates formative assessment purposes and summative assessment purposes. She uses formative assessment to improve the quality of summative assessment pieces during production, and thus improve the final products. She makes restricted use of
individual students’ completed and graded summative assessment tasks for formative purposes associated with the improvement of subsequent assessment tasks.

**Demarcation of formative and summative purposes.** In line with her understanding that system requirements dictate that summative assessment is frequent and all pervasive and the preparation of summative assessment pieces is the primary purpose of Year 12 English, Susan identifies formative assessment as closely linked to the preparation of summative assessment:

200. **T** I think so yeah, yeah, I think so. I think so, that-that’s the goal at the end. Um, yeah, I think-I think what we’re doing is just teaching to assessment. And-and we don’t do anything in this English Work Program that doesn’t relate to a task. (Interview 1)

Susan reports that this understanding is shared between teachers in her school, denoted by her use of “we” to describe the act of teaching to “this English Work Program”. Students similarly identify the focus on summative assessment:

149. **R** So it’s all then in preparation for summative?
150. **T** Yeah, yeah, it is. And even the kids will even make that remark, oh, what, we’re starting a new, cause you start immediately with here’s a next assignment, oh another assignment, but we’ve just finished one and is everything just going to be assignments? I get that repeatedly. (Interview 2)

Susan begins all new units with an emphasis on the summative assessment pieces that culminate at the end of the unit. As described above, a summative assessment piece becomes more than just the means of making judgements about students’ understanding and skill, instead becoming the purpose of the unit. Susan’s discussion of students, her practices and feedback all centre on this understanding.

Susan demarcates formative assessment and summative assessment relative to purpose and timing across the two year Senior English course:

50. **T** … my understanding is that Year 11 is truly formative, um, and the way that I treat them, what I explain to students is that this is your practice run and the idea is for you to, it is the expectation, um, for you to, um, gain some familiarity further familiarity with the genres that we use … So yeah, it’s an adjustment year and then Year 12 is pure summative.

52. **T** … these are the marks that will count towards their exit level year, that 11 stuff doesn’t count … I guess I’m treating Year 11 like the year where they—they get to work out … um (2) you know the how to do and then this is the year where they’re just proving, you know, that they understand that how to do. Year 12 becomes the year where they are showing their stuff. (Interview 1)
Evident in the talk is Susan’s emphasis on formative assessment as rehearsal, timed to occur in Year 11 ahead of Year 12. In Susan’s description above, rehearsal is restricted to practising the genres students will be required to produce in Year 12. In her view, all assessment is focused on the ultimate goal of summative assessment for certification. The purposes of formative assessment are tied to the institutional focus on summative assessment in Year 12. This view is in keeping with the information provided in the Year 12 Senior English Course Overview (Appendix H) included in the SWP (2004). The “assessment possibilities and conditions” outlined in this overview include only assessment tasks that occur at the end of units of work and are understood to contribute to summative certification decisions both during their preparation and at the point of collection. Choices about formative assessment are therefore left to individual teachers in their planning of units and lessons, with an understanding that both formative and summative assessment tasks should be designated in units of work.

Consistent with the demarcation described above, Susan is reluctant to name her Year 12 practices as formative:

260. T Um. I don’t know how much formative work I do-do in Year 12 but it’s ultimately to, um, enable them to, um (2) to-to fulfil the summative assessment. The formative work was just little activities perhaps that, um, are getting them like, perhaps that one that we’re doing there, that are getting them to practise some of the, um, the-the stylistic things, or to engage in some of the concepts that we’re wanting them to ultimately demonstrate an understanding of in the summative assessment. (Interview 1)

As described here, formative assessment takes the form of classroom activities for the purposes of rehearsal of skills, and the engagement with “concepts” required to fulfil summative assessment requirements. There is ample evidence in her talk that she does provide formative opportunities in line with this emphasis on rehearsal, and details of these practices are discussed further in this chapter.

Compatible with the rehearsal model described by Susan earlier, it is assumed that there will be a carry-forward of knowledge about genres by students from Year 11 to Year 12. Susan uses the example of a Year 12 summative assessment task requiring students to write a feature article that was preceded by the teaching and assessment of this genre during a formal assessment task in Year 11. She describes the links between these two thus:

46. T But, um, then I just go on to talking about the assignment. They would have done a feature article in Year 11, so it’s just a-a review of that. (Interview 2)
In this way, Susan expects that preparation for Year 12 summative assessment pieces does not require new learning, but is a review of Year 11 learning. She indicates that Year 11 exemplars are re-used with Year 12 students because learning about the set genre or form was already complete. It is understood, therefore, that Susan plans for Year 12 assessment through an understanding of Year 11 units of work and assessment pieces and emphasis on genres.

As indicated in Chapter 2, students develop skills in writing in different genres, grouped under categories of text types. It is not a requirement of the Syllabus that genres are repeated across the year levels and the analysis of the summative assessment tasks from Year 11 to Year 12 revealed that there is not direct one-to-one correspondence of genres or text types to be examined. In Table 11, it can be seen that the feature article and written expository essay are two genres that are assessed in both year levels. However, other genres and text types do not correspond directly across the year levels. The skills and knowledges needed to produce different genres belonging to the same text types can be similar. For example, persuasive and public texts are carried forward from Year 11 into Year 12. Susan’s assertion above, therefore, that there is carry forward in the teaching of genres across Year 11 to Year 12 does not fully reflect the assessment program as outlined in the SWP.
Table 11

*Summative Assessment Tasks Across Years 11 and 12 (Plains SHS, 2003)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks occurring:</th>
<th>Tasks: Number (signifies order in which they are submitted); text types; genres</th>
<th>Tasks: Number (listed out of submission order, but relative to corresponding tasks completed in Year 11); text types; genres</th>
<th>Tasks occurring:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1 of two year Senior English course – Year 11</td>
<td>Task 1 Spoken/signed persuasive/reflective genre ↔ Task 3 Spoken/signed public text-legal speech</td>
<td></td>
<td>Across Semesters 3 and 4 of two year Senior English Course in the order from 1 to 7—Year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2 Written imaginative text-narrative short story ↔ Task 1 Written imaginative-interior monologue</td>
<td>Task 4 Written public text-feature article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 3 Written persuasive/reflective-feature article ↔ Task 4 Written public text-feature article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 2 of two year Senior English course – Year 11</td>
<td>Task 4 Spoken/signed expository/analytical-class forum ↔ Task 5 Spoken/signed exposition/multimedia presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 5 Written exposition-essay ↔ Task 6 Written analytic exposition</td>
<td>Task 6 Written analytic exposition ↔ Task 2 Written analytic exposition-research task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 6 Spoken imaginative-eulogy ↔ Task 1 Written imaginative-interior monologue</td>
<td>Task 7 Spoken/imaginative transformation of text-drama</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 7 Public text/reflective/persuasive-biography ↔ Task 3 Spoken/signed public text-legal speech</td>
<td>Task 4 Written public text-feature article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: clear block arrows indicate one-to-one correspondence of genres from Year 11 to Year 12; black arrows indicate overlap between text types.
**Formative assessment and product improvement.** As already discussed, Susan identifies a clear focus on summative assessment grades and certification. In her view, this manifests itself at system and local level as a clear goal for the teacher:

220. **T** My purpose probably is to ensure that they get the best mark possible … that seems to be the thrust, that the idea is to get them to a point, you know, to get them the mark. The grade is the all important. (Interview 1)

According to this description the purpose of Susan’s work is the improvement of grades and the evidence of improvement of achievement is measured in summative assessment grades. Her actions in the provision of formative feedback are integral to students’ achievement of the purpose of improving grades.

In contrast with Ros, Susan does not herself connect “learning” and formative assessment throughout the interview. Her talk reveals the demarcation between learning and Year 12 summative assessment preparation:

147. **R** … is there any work that you do in a unit in Year 12 that is for learning improvement for its own sake …?

148. **T** No, no, I don’t think so. (Interview 2)

For Susan, the sustained focus on grades for certification purposes means that the learning that does occur is focused on the development of skills and knowledge to produce and improve summative assessment pieces to be graded. In Susan’s view a summative assessment production focus precludes a focus on other learning:

320. **T** … something that doesn’t necessarily relate to the ultimate end product but something that is having a formative effect on your ability to…analyse text, use language, do the kinds of things that we that we are assessing in their summative pieces. (Interview 1)

Susan can be heard here describing activities that contribute to students’ greater expertise in Senior English. She uses the term “formative” to describe the development of particular skills and indicates that these “English” skills are not sufficiently developed in the preparation of summative assessment pieces.

Despite this clearly stated focus on producing pieces of work for summative assessment, Susan identifies some other underlying aims:

200. **T** I mean ho-hopefully we’re-we are doing other things as well that we are, um, satisfying some of those global kinds of aims like, you know, trying to get them to look at, you know, things from a different perspective, and, to understand how the text is, that kind of thing. (Interview 1)

In keeping with her concerns stated above she does not describe “global aims” as the central focus of both herself and her students during units of work. The aims she refers to
are the global aims of the Syllabus, reproduced in the SWP, including a focus on students’ developing knowledge and engagement with language and texts, in response to cultural contexts and social situations. Susan describes these aims in the talk sequence above as occurring incidentally, while the goal of summative assessment for grades is pursued.

While she has identified a focus on improvement, Susan reports that improvement is restricted to incremental measures, expressed in terms of grades for summative assessment products. She indicates that the improvement of these pieces through drafting is restricted:

88. T Yeah, yeah, I think so, I think that drafting process does make a difference, but only probably a half grade difference… but for those students who are willing to polish their work, I say this doesn’t make sense, this bit here, or can you think of better words, sometimes you might make suggestions, yeah, that definitely makes a difference. It’s just a polishing sort of process more than anything. (Interview 2)

Susan asserts that the restricted, half grade improvement measure is dependent upon student engagement with the drafting process: receiving feedback and reacting to that feedback to improve their work. She describes this as a “polishing” process and one that is dependent upon her feedback making “suggestions” that improve the summative assessment grade.

**Use of graded summative assessment pieces for formative assessment purposes.** There is limited use of students’ individual graded summative assessment pieces for feedforward formative purposes associated with improvement of subsequent assessment pieces. Instead, Susan’s focus is on her knowledge of the class group’s performances on the previous summative assessment piece at the beginning of each new unit:

166. T Ah what I often do is just give a general kind of feedback and say look, marks were lost in these sort of areas. Um, you know, generally speaking this is what you know (where we kick off). (I sometimes say) generally, you know, needed to do, um, and for example today, um in English I had…I was referring back to something that we’d done last time and said look, you know, marks were lost in the last piece because of this, so make sure with this piece you’re doing this, this and this, you know. (Interview 1)

At the beginning of a unit, Susan provides “general” group feedback about the class’s performance weaknesses in the previous unit’s summative assessment piece. There is a
deliberate feedforward function as Susan outlines the significance of the class’s past performance for their production of the new unit’s summative assessment task.

Other than this broad reference to class performance trends, summative assessment pieces are treated as a series of terminal grades. These pieces are stored at the end of each unit in folders, known as student folios, to be submitted to District Review Panels. Their use by individual students for improvement is thus closed off and individuals do not systematically use their summative assessment pieces and individual feedback for formative purposes. While the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) makes no explicit statement about the use of summative assessment for formative purposes, the emphasis on the developmental nature of learning across the two year English course pre-supposes that learning does not end when summative assessment pieces are produced, graded and returned to students.

Part 3 - Classroom Assessment Practices and Social Interactions

Susan’s formative assessment practices are examined further in the following two sections. The first gives emphasis to the nature and function of those practices in the classroom. The second section focuses on Susan’s role and the role of students in formative assessment with an emphasis on continuing dependence.

The nature and function of Susan’s formative assessment practices: pedagogy and formative assessment. The data reveals that pedagogy and formative assessment merge in Susan’s classroom. As for Ros, Susan’s pedagogical choices include formative assessment interactions designed to provide feedback. Susan describes the nature of these formative assessment interactions as changing across a unit of work:

8. T So first of all it starts with me dispensing information, general information, and then we might do some small group work where I might be talking with kids at a small group level and then it culminates in one-on-one with me discussing with individuals. (Interview 2)

As indicated here, and depicted in Figure 9, there is a pushing forward across a unit of work from “dispensing” information that Susan characterised as central to her role as the teacher, described earlier, to interactions with students in small groups with an emphasis on Susan’s feedback. Later in the unit, feedback interactions occur predominantly between Susan and individual students, with Susan retaining responsibility for feedback on summative assessment drafts. The nature and function of these interactions, realised
through pedagogical and formative assessment routines developed over Susan’s years as a teacher, are explored below.

**Routinised formative assessment: phases and teacher feedback.** The analyses of the interviews and artefacts revealed that Susan, like Ros, moves students through a unit of work in four routinised phases: 1) Initiating; 2) Content knowledge and skills development; 3) Summative assessment product improvement; and 4) Closing. Susan and Ros have similar approaches. Each phase is characterised by the part it plays in the production of summative assessment pieces and the emphasis on making formative assessment opportunities available to students. Phases 2 and 3 are intensive work development phases when formative feedback occurs as part of different classroom activities in both verbal and written modes. These two phases are explored in detail below.

Susan indicates above that Phase 1 of the unit is used to dispense information to students about the summative assessment task, the thematic or genre focus of the unit and the focus text to be studied. Task sheets and task-specific assessment criteria and standards are distributed at this point. As no student work is produced in this phase, there are no formative feedback opportunities relative to this new unit of work. However, it is in this phase that Susan refers to the class’s previous summative performance as a group using summative assessment feedback for feedforward purposes, as outlined earlier.

In Phase 4, students submit summative assessment pieces and then receive back their grades with written teacher feedback. The students update their profiles and the items are stored in students’ work folios awaiting their possible selection for moderation and verification procedures. These feedback comments have a feedforward function, which is delayed until the beginning of the next unit of work, in relation to the next summative assessment piece to be produced. However, as mentioned above, Susan does not emphasise the use of individual feedback.

The Syllabus (QBSSSSS, 2002b) and Plains SHS SWP (2004) provide the same advice that observation, consultation and focused textual analysis are assessment techniques to be used for both formative and summative assessment purposes associated with providing students with information about their language use. The interview data indicates that all three techniques are used in some capacity by Susan, but that observation and consultation occur informally in routine classroom processes where Susan interacts with students in both Phases 2 and 3 of the unit. Focused textual analysis
for formative purposes occurs only in Phase 3 as Susan provides detailed feedback on drafts of assessment tasks designed as being for summative purposes.
Figure 9. Unit phases highlighting formative feedback opportunities during units of work.
Phase 2: content knowledge and skills development and a focus on the group.

During this phase of the unit, Susan emphasises the development of content knowledge and skills needed to complete summative assessment pieces. This is done through a focus on shared group understandings measured against her stance as the expert. According to her descriptions of her strategies, her practices are not one-way processes:

20. T I would start with okay, here’s the information that I know, but when we get to the stage of looking at readings of texts and character analysis, we usually sort of work as a class. Like, you work together to find out what you know, and we’ll all compile our information and put it on the board… (Interview 2)

In this description, Susan’s pedagogical strategy involves a focus on developing shared understandings between herself and her students. Susan uses artefacts, including worksheets, student work exemplars, other exemplars, texts and deconstructions of texts to focus students’ reading and analysis of a particular unit focus text, concept, or skill moving to incorporate students’ individual, or small-group answers into whole-class discussions. This provides formative information to Susan about students’ understandings, and ensures students are involved in a series of verbal feedback loops.

Susan’s role in these interactions is influenced by her understanding that she is the “expert”:

20. T Like, you work together to find out what you know, and we’ll all compile our information and put it on the board and usually if I’ve got some information that – I usually go through and do the exercise myself, if I’ve got things that I’ve discovered in my reading that they haven’t discovered, I add those to what they’ve got. (Interview 2)

In this description, Susan ensures that students develop planned content knowledge and skills, adding further information and feedback to the discussion. She describes this as a routine practice. During these types of activities, feedback is provided as part of a whole-class discussion.

The close link between pedagogy and feedback is demonstrated in the example of a pedagogical activity Susan routinely uses in her classroom (see Figure 10). Susan refers to this as a jigsaw activity. It involves students working as a group to build shared understandings about a text and then sharing those understandings across groups and the class as a whole group. Feedback occurs through peer discussion in groups, with final feedback received from Susan during whole-class discussion.

Susan nominates a clear purpose of her pedagogical formative strategies:
Susan describes a rehearsal element here, with the practising of skills, or engagement with concepts focused towards what students will be required to do during summative assessment.

The dominance of summative assessment in Year 12, discussed earlier, has particular repercussions for her classroom practices:

During content knowledge and skills development, therefore, Susan positions her class as a group. Her routines are pragmatic, influenced by a perceived lack of time and focused on the end product—the curriculum and summative assessment goals. In this talk segment Susan describes the process of moving together as a set of steps that must be experienced sequentially and in a particular order so that the class comes to each step together. She indicates that there is no differentiation or accommodations for individuals’ “particular needs”. In contrast with Ros’s reported practices, Susan does not focus on improving the skills of individuals in the classroom by providing written feedback on individual students’ work. However, through group discussions based on individual and small-group work, she provides feedback on the group’s performance in class. Susan relies on whole-class and small-group discussions to facilitate students’ movement forward as a group.

Susan does not rely on homework tasks to improve content knowledge and skills, concerned that students do not consistently complete homework tasks. She describes only one opportunity for written feedback to individual students during the content knowledge and skills development phase in one unit in the Plains SHS Year 12 program:

Susan describes a formative purpose of these activities, but they are used only in the preparation for summative written examinations with unseen questions. Under these assessment conditions students do not have access to feedback opportunities available
when students are able to prepare drafts of assessment items prepared under assignment conditions. In keeping with the emphasis on Susan’s feedback, this activity provides the students with the opportunity to access teacher feedback. As indicated in Chapter 2, it is mandatory that one unit in Year 12 be assessed under examination conditions with an unseen question.

Yr 12 English - “Othello” Jigsaw Activity

Activity procedure:

1. Create a small group of three. This will be your ‘home’ group.

2. Assign each of the members of the group Task A, B or C.

3. Each group member will form a new group with the Task A, B or C members from the other groups. These new groups will be known as the ‘expert’ groups. (i.e. all Task ‘A’ s together etc.)

4. Using the sheets provided for each task, each student in the ‘expert’ group is assigned a section of the task to complete.

5. Once completed, each student in the expert group explains their findings to the rest of the group, who record the information in the appropriate section on their task sheets.

6. Once all information is recorded, home groups are reformed and each expert presents their findings to the other members of the home group, who record this information.

7. A representative from each home group then presents the group’s findings to the class.

Figure 10. Pedagogical activity with whole class and small group formative feedback.

Interpretation and mediation of assessment criteria and standards. Susan’s practices include a focus on assessment artefacts through student exploration and teacher talk about expected quality. In some units of work, students receive three assessment artefacts associated with the production of a summative assessment task. These can
include stated assessment criteria and standards developed by the HOD (referred to as assessment criteria and standards-Figure 11); criteria and standards generated by Susan (referred to as Susan’s criteria and standards-Figure 12); and a student self-assessment checklist authored by Susan (referred to as self-assessment checklist-Figure 13). The last two are used in the classroom for formative assessment purposes and are Susan’s interpretation of the requirements of the task, and the assessment criteria and standards.

The assessment criteria and standards authored by the Head of Department reproduce the official assessment language of the Syllabus comprising three mandated, organising criteria which are expected to be drawn from the Exit Criteria and Standards: control of texts in their contexts; control of textual features; and knowledge and understanding of text construction. Similar to Ros, Susan reports that she is reluctant to use the official assessment criteria and standards with students. In her view, the language is not “reader friendly”, and is “too kind of wordy and too teacher talk” (Interview 1, 99-101). However, despite the complexity of the language Susan identifies criteria and standards as being sufficiently important as to warrant explicit attention, and she does this through interpreting the official criteria and standards, and expressing these as unofficial written and unofficial spoken criteria and standards. She supports students’ understanding of the assessment criteria and standards through her classroom talk:

115. T No, I mean I continually make sort of reference to these things (the criteria) but I mean I don’t use the actual words there, but say, you know, things like the first criteria (sic) is about this, the second criteria (sic) about that, the third criteria (sic) is about that, and so you need to go back and look at what the criteria (sic) is asking … (Interview 1)

In this way she gives more information to students about the criteria and makes connections between student work and the criteria. She references the assessment criteria and standards in her discussions and in doing so, she mediates the criteria for her students.

Susan’s criteria and standards (Figure 12) are also an interpretation of the official assessment criteria and standards, informed predominantly by her own experience:

34. T … I think it’s informed by what I think is important … I don’t think I actually went back to that (assessment criteria and standards) when I did that [generated criteria and standards]. (Interview 2)

Later in the same interview, Susan contradicts her description thus:

46. T Yeah, and I’d say I’ve gone back here then and said okay, have I covered most of the things in here (assessment criteria and standards), but my first
point of reference would have been what I, myself, and what I felt was lacking in previous … (Interview 2)

Despite these different views of the relationship between the official assessment criteria and standards and the version she generated herself, the point is clearly made that the assessment criteria and standards are secondary to her own view of what is important in the task. Her criteria and standards are drawn from her understanding of what the task entails as set out on the task sheet. They are also informed by her experiences teaching this unit of work to other student cohorts in the past. She checks broadly that she has “covered most of the things” in the assessment criteria and standards (see Figure 11) as a last pass before sharing her own documents with her students. She can be heard prioritising the explicitness of criteria, but in terms of creating a version of the criteria that aligns with her view of what is important.

Susan’s authoring of her own criteria and standards is therefore an interpretive process:

38. T And structure, um, so I was at pains to point out that the headline reflected the article and they’re asked in this to position the reader, that’s an important ( ). Most of these go on about positioning your reader to (reading from task sheet) “In your feature article you will construct a persuasive text which positions readers to agree with your views” so I’ve tried to reinforce that there (refers to the Feature Article Marking Criteria sheet). (Interview 2)

Susan prioritises certain task features revealing what she considers valuable in the task. As can be seen in Table 12, there are significant differences between the official criteria and the two documents she generated: Susan’s criteria and standards; and the self-assessment checklist. Instead of the official statement of three criteria in the assessment criteria and standards, Susan includes five criteria that have some correlation to the original document, but which give emphasis to different aspects of the task: purpose, structure, language, subject matter and text construction. The self-assessment checklist includes six elements that Susan identifies as constituting an appropriate response to the task.
### YEAR 12 SEMESTER 1, 2003 – SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY – PUBLIC TEXT: FEATURE ARTICLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTROL OF TEXTS IN THEIR CONTEXTS</strong></td>
<td>You have demonstrated that feature article is shared by its purpose, genre, and register choices through:</td>
<td>You have demonstrated that meanings in a feature article are shared by purpose, genre, and register choices through:</td>
<td>You have demonstrated that meanings in a feature article are shared by purpose, genre, and register choices through:</td>
<td>You have demonstrated that meanings in a feature article are shared by purpose, genre, and register choices through:</td>
<td>You have demonstrated that meanings in a feature article are shared by purpose, genre, and register choices through:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Selecting substantial subject matter relevant to a character in Shakespearean Tragedy.</td>
<td>● Selecting sufficient subject matter relevant to a character in Shakespearean Tragedy.</td>
<td>● Selecting subject matter relevant to a character in Shakespearean Tragedy.</td>
<td>● Generally selecting subject matter relevant to a character in Shakespearean Tragedy.</td>
<td>● Selecting subject matter relevant to a character in Shakespearean Tragedy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Establishing and exploiting the roles and relationships of a journalist and an audience of newspaper readers.</td>
<td>● Establishing and maintaining the roles and relationships of a journalist and an audience of newspaper readers.</td>
<td>● Effectively incorporating key concepts into your feature article.</td>
<td>● Incorporating the main concepts into your feature article.</td>
<td>● Incorporating few concepts into your feature article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTROL OF TEXTUAL FEATURES</strong></td>
<td>You have employed very effective language choices in your feature article through:</td>
<td>You have employed mostly effective language choices in your feature article through:</td>
<td>You have employed mostly effective language choices in your feature article through:</td>
<td>You have employed some appropriate language choices in your feature article through:</td>
<td>You have demonstrated that meanings in a feature article are shared by purpose, genre, and register choices through:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● The sequencing of subject matter according to generic structure.</td>
<td>● Mainly sequencing subject matter according to generic structure.</td>
<td>● Generally sequencing subject matter according to generic structure.</td>
<td>● Sometimes sequencing subject matter according to generic structure.</td>
<td>● Selecting subject matter relevant to a character in Shakespearean Tragedy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Cohesive ties that link ideas with discernment.</td>
<td>● Link ideas cohesively.</td>
<td>● Link ideas cohesively.</td>
<td>● Occasionally supporting opinions and ideas with fine argumentation and evidence.</td>
<td>● Identifying the roles and relationships of a journalist and an audience of newspaper readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Supporting opinions and ideas with logic, argumentation, and evidence.</td>
<td>● Usually supporting opinions and ideas with fine argumentation and evidence.</td>
<td>● A basic range of appropriate vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● A range of basic vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● Incorporating the main concepts into your feature article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● An imaginative, extensive range of appropriate vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● A range of appropriate vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● A range of appropriate vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● A range of basic vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● Incorporating few concepts into your feature article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● A very wide range of appropriate clause and sentence structures with accomplished paragraphing and punctuation.</td>
<td>● A wide range of appropriate clause and sentence structures with appropriate paragraphing and punctuation.</td>
<td>● An imaginative, extensive range of appropriate vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● An imaginative, extensive range of appropriate vocabulary choices using conventional spelling.</td>
<td>● Incorporating few concepts into your feature article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING</strong></td>
<td>You have made subtle and complex distinctions through:</td>
<td>You have made fine distinctions through:</td>
<td>You have made general distinctions through:</td>
<td>You have made very general distinctions through:</td>
<td>You have made very general distinctions through:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Evaluating the ways in which a character in Shakespearean Tragedy is a construct of individuals, groups, times and places.</td>
<td>● Evaluating the ways in which a character in Shakespearean Tragedy is a construct of individuals, groups, times and places.</td>
<td>● Identifying the ways in which a character in Shakespearean Tragedy is a construct of individuals, groups, times and places.</td>
<td>● Identifying the ways in which a character in Shakespearean Tragedy is a construct of individuals, groups, times and places.</td>
<td>● Identifying and sometimes using the knowledge that texts are created with the assumption readers have certain knowledge, backgrounds, values, beliefs and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Thoroughly evaluating the ways in which a character in Shakespearean Tragedy is a construct of individuals, groups, times and places.</td>
<td>● Evaluating and employing the knowledge that texts are created with the assumption readers have certain knowledge, backgrounds, values, beliefs and attitudes.</td>
<td>● Evaluating and employing the knowledge that texts are created with the assumption readers have certain knowledge, backgrounds, values, beliefs and attitudes.</td>
<td>● Identifying and sometimes using the knowledge that texts are created with the assumption readers have certain knowledge, backgrounds, values, beliefs and attitudes.</td>
<td>● Identifying and sometimes using the knowledge that texts are created with the assumption readers have certain knowledge, backgrounds, values, beliefs and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Skillfully evaluating and exploiting the knowledge that texts are created with the assumption readers have certain knowledge, backgrounds, values, beliefs and attitudes.</td>
<td>● Evaluating and employing the understanding that texts position reader.</td>
<td>● Evaluating and employing the understanding that texts position reader.</td>
<td>● Identifying and sometimes using the understanding that texts position reader.</td>
<td>● Identifying and sometimes using the understanding that texts position reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Comprehensively evaluating and exploiting the understanding that texts position reader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 11. Assessment criteria and standards (Case Report 2).

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15 This is a reproduction of the original document which could not be copied clearly.
### Feature Article Marking Criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong></td>
<td>Does it represent an argument that informs and analyzes the events of the trial?</td>
<td>Is highly effective in achieving</td>
<td>Achieves effectively</td>
<td>Achieves satisfactorily</td>
<td>Achieves to a limited degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does it attempt to persuade you to accept a certain point of view?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure:</strong></td>
<td>Does the headline adequately reflect the main point of the article?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the article present an obvious viewpoint regarding the trial and its outcome?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does it comply with the structure of a feature article?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the physical layout comply with that of a newspaper feature article?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language:</strong></td>
<td>Is the language used appropriate stylistically (i.e. Does it suit that of a journalist of a metropolitan newspaper addressing an audience?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the vocabulary well-chosen and extensive?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the expression clear and fluent?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the spelling, grammar and punctuation accurate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject matter:</strong></td>
<td>Is the construction of characters faithful to the original text?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does it include sufficient subject matter from the play?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does it effectively translate the text into a modern context?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text construction:</strong></td>
<td>Does the article position the reader to accept a certain viewpoint?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the discourses consistent with those in the original text?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 12. Susan’s criteria and standards.*

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16 This is a reproduction of the original document which could not be copied clearly.
Checklist:

Before you submit your final draft, use the following checklist to ensure that you have appropriately addressed the requirements of the assignment:

☐ Is your argument both informative and analytical? (Does it include analysis of events and prosecution and defence arguments?)

☐ Does it have an persuasive objective and an obvious thesis/main point? (Do you position the reader?)

☐ Does it follow the outlined structure for feature article?

☐ Is your vocabulary well-chosen, reflecting an educated tone?

☐ Is expression clear and fluent and technical aspects of language accurate?

☐ Is your translation of the plot reflective of the characters traits and motivations from the original text?

Figure 13. Self-assessment checklist.

Figure 14. Feedback comments on graded summative assessment task.

A highly appropriate response to the task. Generally expressed clearly and fluently, though layout could have been improved. Whilst your article effectively positions the reader, your headline is a little clumsy in its expression and could have more clearly reflected your position.

A-
To highlight the lack of direct correspondence between the different documents, Table 13 presents the first criterion of the assessment criteria and standards and juxtaposes this with relevant criteria from Susan’s criteria and standards and a relevant checkpoint from the standards and self-assessment checklist. Susan’s criteria and standards provide different information about the task from both other documents. For example, the discussion of subject matter becomes a focus on faithfulness of character portrayal, a sufficiency of subject matter and a translation of the original text [bolded in Table 13]. Susan selects particular terminology to discuss quality using terms that are not included in the task sheet or assessment criteria and standards (indicated here in bold), but are consistent with her view of what is important in a feature article: it informs and analyses; it translates the text; it uses stylistically appropriate language; the headline reflects the main point; the expression is clear and fluent; and discourses are consistent with those in the original text. The complex inter-relatedness of criteria across the three documents is evidenced, with several criteria from Susan’s criteria and standards aligning with criterion one. Susan’s criteria and standards function as a translation of the assessment criteria and standards. While a direct reference to discourse is not a feature of the assessment criteria and standards used to make judgements of the students’ assessment pieces, or the task specifications, Susan prioritises it in her criteria and
standards. The three assessment documents, official assessment criteria and standards, Susan’s criteria and standards and the self-assessment checklist provide quite different descriptions of quality criteria for students.

Table 13

*Comparison of Criterial Descriptors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment criteria and standards</th>
<th>Susan’s criteria and standards</th>
<th>Self-assessment checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion one</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have demonstrated that meanings in a feature article are shaped by its purpose, genre, and register choices through:</td>
<td><strong>Subject matter:</strong> Is the construction of characters <em>faithful</em> to the original text? Does it include <em>sufficient</em> subject matter from the play? Does it effectively <em>translate</em> the text into a <em>modern context</em>?</td>
<td>Is your translation of the plot reflective of the characters (sic) traits and motivations from the original text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Selecting subject matter relevant to a character in Shakespearean Tragedy.</td>
<td><strong>Language:</strong> Is the language used appropriate stylistically? (i.e. does it suit that of a journalist of a metropolitan newspaper addressing an audience?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generally establishing and maintaining the roles and relationships of a journalist and an audience of newspaper readers</td>
<td><strong>Structure</strong> Does the article represent an obvious viewpoint regarding the trial and its outcome?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incorporating the main concepts into your feature article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Susan produces criteria and standards for “most” units of work, she reports that she does not make summative assessment checklists available as frequently. She describes the checklist she used in a particular unit as follows:
She describes making explicit connections between exemplars and the checklist, indicating to students that the checklist can be used to make judgements and to recognise the features of a quality performance. That the checklist is an interpretation of the assessment criteria and standards is evidenced in the second checklist point in Figure 13: Does it have an (sic) **persuasive objective** and an **obvious thesis/main point**? (Do you position the reader?). This correlates with all three assessment criteria in the assessment criteria and standards: knowledge and control of texts in their contexts; knowledge and control of textual features; and knowledge and application of the constructedness of texts. The checklist also includes the additional terms, bolded above, that do not appear in Susan’s criteria and standards.

Susan’s feedback comments on the submitted summative assessment piece (Figure 14) provide another form of evidence of how she measures students’ performances, and what characteristics of the performance she prioritises in her feedback. She emphasises particular aspects of the student’s performance: clear expression and fluency of language, layout and headline and aspects relating to criteria one and two with an emphasis on the technical aspects of the task. The comments also prioritise criterion three, making reference to positioning the reader. Susan’s comments are evaluative, indicating what added to and detracted from a quality performance. Repeating the reference to “appropriateness” in the self-assessment checklist, Susan expresses this as the overall standard of the work: “a highly appropriate response”.

Susan gives emphasis to matching student understanding to teacher understanding about task expectations through an examination of different standards using her criteria and standards:

Susan describes a common departmental process of providing students with the opportunity to understand the “idea” of different standards of performance, as well as the characteristics of a particular standard. Susan employs a pedagogical formative strategy in which groups of students examine exemplars of a written task to assign a standard.

Susan’s criteria and standards do not include detailed, articulated standards expressed as
descriptions of the criteria, as can be seen in Figure 11. This is a model of criteria and standards that is reminiscent of criteria specifications after ROSBA’s implementation in the 1980s, before teachers were required to produce task-specific assessment criteria and standards. In this classroom activity students must therefore make judgements, co-constructing group versions of standards by identifying features and matching these to the criteria and standards. However, these judgements are not based on defined standards provided by the teacher.

Her stated purposes are wide ranging:

52. T I’m wanting them to be able to see, there’s a couple of things, in a sneaky way, I’m wanting those kids that seem to think that their ‘C’ level work is fantastic, get them to see what an ‘A’ looks like and get them to see that hey, this is the standard because a lot of them don’t. But also for them just to be able to identify what we’re looking for, that these are the things we’re looking for. And interestingly, most of them concur with the marks, there are very few aberrations from the kind of marks that I’ve given them and they can immediately see—they can immediately rank them in terms of ‘A’, ’B’, ‘C’, um, with a few exceptions.

As described here, Susan uses this activity as a tool to build knowledge of standards against her unofficial, teacher-generated criteria, expressing the standards as letter grades, expectations of quality and teacher judgements. Susan also encourages students to read ‘A’ standard written exemplars to assist their construction of their own written summative tasks.

Susan provides students with a verbal description of an ‘A’ standard spoken performance. They then gain experience with standards as they assess their peers using Susan’s explication of the ‘A’ standard, as well as the unofficial criteria and standards she has generated:

159. T … once they’ve finished their draft I try and get them say in a couple of lessons before the orals to each get up and present say two paragraphs of their speech and then get their class to, you know, offer feedback.

This activity also contributes towards the development of students’ evaluative expertise, with students matching these part-rehearsals with Susan’s criteria and standards. Despite the strong emphasis given to the activities that develop students’ skills in this way, Susan does not have a larger view of the use of the assessment criteria and standards or her criteria and standards in self-assessment. Moreover, there is no reported development, encouragement or expectation that students will self-assess. While this seems to be a contradiction in her practices, it is in keeping with her strongly held view of student dependence, as discussed earlier.
As indicated in Chapter 2, the Syllabus recommends that students gain evaluative expertise through their “participation in task design and generation of task-specific criteria and standards” (QBSSSSS, 2002b, p. 9) and the SWP reiterates this statement (Plains SHS, 2004). However, summative assessment task sheets and task-specific criteria and standards are pre-planned as part of Review Panel approval processes, prior to the commencement of units of work. At the school level this is interpreted as a fixed representation of the program of assessment, with an emphasis on meeting Review Panel requirements, as mentioned earlier.

**Phase 3: summative assessment product improvement phase and feedback and individual improvement.** Susan provides feedback to individual students on their rough drafts of summative assessment pieces during Phase 3 of each unit. While Phase 2 featured many opportunities for verbal feedback in group and whole-class discussions, Susan’s written feedback on rough drafts becomes the focus during the third phase as she interacts with students to improve summative assessment products through feedback on focused textual analysis. Susan reports that individual students are dependent on her feedback to improve their written summative assessment products. There are no opportunities for group summative assessment in the Year 12 English program at Plains SHS.

Susan sees the provision of written feedback on individuals’ draft work as central to her role as teacher and she positions herself as integral to their improvement. As mentioned earlier, she is focused on ensuring that students “get the best mark possible” (Interview 1, 220) and this achievement is dependent upon her written and accompanying verbal feedback on individual students’ written drafts, including written scripts of spoken performances. Verbal feedback features as part of conferencing during draft lessons as students plan and begin their writing, and as a means of elaborating on written feedback.

As is common practice in Queensland Senior English classrooms, importance is given to the in class preparation of summative assessment pieces, with a series of lessons routinely used for this purpose in each unit of work:

133. **T** Yeah, yeah. They usually have say, aw, um, we give them say three or four lessons in class to work on it as well as at home of course, they submit a draft and then maybe, um, and I would try to give them the feedback as-as soon as I possibly can. (Interview 1)

As indicated here, the lessons provide an opportunity for immediate feedback, designed to allow students to adjust their work before submission of the final product. Feedback
interactions occur both inside and outside the classroom and include a series of feedback loops:

141. T … I get them to do a plan first and bring out their plans and show me their plans and then you know go on to writing the drafts. Sometimes kids will bring out their work and you’ll conference with them or they’ll ask for ideas. (Interview 1)

Except for tasks produced under examination conditions, where students answer unseen questions, they have opportunities to access Susan’s feedback in class and respond to that feedback in order to improve their written drafts. The first feedback loop is verbal feedback in response to students’ initial plans of their summative assessment drafts. The written feedback is a formal response to student work, which is taken by Susan to be looked at overnight. For some groups of students she provides further feedback during “informal” conversations at the staffroom door in addition to the formal conferencing that occurs in class. This unequal provision of feedback is discussed later in the chapter.

**Rough draft feedback characteristics.** Susan’s formative written feedback on rough drafts indicates how students can improve their current piece of work in order to improve their summative assessment mark. Susan reports that her feedback includes several elements, as she describes:

155. T Usually I, um, obviously, you know, circle technical errors and things like that and then at the end I usually put a general comment, um, and give maybe like a ballpark, you know, this is sort of ‘B’-ish range, ‘A’-ish range or whatever and then write, you know, some improvements would include and then sort of list maybe say four things that they would need to do if they wanted to, you know. Um, of course it wouldn’t be the case of an ‘A’ piece but with a ‘C’ or ‘B’ piece of work. (Interview 1)

Susan’s formative feedback on three summative rough drafts was analysed against her self-report: two written summative assessment pieces (samples one and two); and the written draft script of a spoken presentation (sample three). Susan’s feedback samples generally show that she does subscribe to the approach she describes here on technical errors, comments and grade range. The samples indicate that Susan does not generally provide descriptive comments, but that evaluative comments are characteristic of her written feedback. These comments provide information about improvement of the work. Evaluative comments in the excerpt below include advice that the work: needs to be longer; needs to sound more sophisticated; and that the student needs to expand the conclusion. She urges a student to access exemplars of successful writing to “get an idea
of style and the tone”, evidence of the importance she gives to using exemplars in building students’ understanding of quality.

As can be seen from these examples, Susan’s feedback is predominantly task-focused, providing information on the features of the task. In the feedback exemplars she provided there is one feedback comment that focuses on the student, rather than the task. Susan makes a comment about the potential of the student versus the student’s current position: “I think you could do better than this!”

The analysis of the feedback sample above shows that while Susan clearly provides evaluative comments that indicate an improved possible approach by outlining what is missing from the work or what further should be done to improve it, emphasis is also given to copy editing. Feedback on “technical errors” is the focus of the formative feedback in both exemplars. Susan identifies and characterises the category of some errors, labelling them as syntax, semantic, punctuation, spelling or tense errors. She also intervenes in the student’s text to re-write sentences, or words. The excerpt above demonstrates the emphasis on copy editing. Susan inserts a missing word (at), crosses out an extraneous word (who) and substitutes grammatically correct words for those that are not (of; what/about; what; who/that). Further to this, Susan indicates a way to improve the structure of a sentence. She also categorises a particular error as a problem with
expression, advising that the student should rewrite a sentence. Across the analysed exemplars, there are more examples of different forms of interventions into the text to rewrite sentences or words than there are instances of categorising errors in the provided feedback exemplars. Of the 73 separate annotations made in the exemplars, 46 involve copy-editing to fix errors. Another 13 annotations identify and characterise the category of error, but do not fix errors. In comparison, 14 are evaluative comments or suggestions for improvement. Susan’s focus on correcting technical errors does demonstrate an improved possible approach, but this is achieved through fixing the error for the student.

As indicated in Chapter 2, the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) provides only limited advice about the requirements, or characteristics of feedback on students’ written drafts, stating that good feedback is not “continual feedback on written scripts in the form of copious teacher annotations and corrections and exhaustive line by line critical analysis” (p. 18). The Plains SHS SWP (2004) reiterates this message. The exemplars show that Susan’s tendency is towards annotations and corrections. Whether this constitutes exhaustive line by line critical analysis is uncertain. However, Susan does make available multiple feedback opportunities to students who are willing to access them, which has different repercussions for different groups.

Susan provides marks as part of her feedback on summative assessment drafts:

78. T And I try to give as detailed feedback as I can and try and assign them some sort of draft mark without committing myself too much, so it’s in the ‘D’ range or the ‘C’ range. (Interview 2)

Susan describes marks on draft pieces of work as non-specific judgements that are merely indicators for the student and not marks for certification or reporting purposes. The marks are expressed in terms of levels of achievement that would ultimately be assigned to the finished summative assessment product. She describes the need to assign them “without committing myself too much”. She does not specifically report that there is no carry-through from these draft marks to summative assessment grades, but from her disassociation from these marks it could be observed that this is a draft mark only. Built into this approach is the understanding that the interim mark is significant for the student and provides information about the current performance, in addition to the “detailed” feedback that focuses on improvement. The use of the interim levels of achievement instead of numbered grades is consistent with the wholly qualitative approach of the Queensland standards-referenced system. As seen in the feedback exemplar above, Susan provides a fine-grained draft “mark”, judging the draft to at ‘C+’ level. This is in
comparison with Ros’s practice of stating a grade “range”. There is no official expression of plus and minus marks in the standards, although they are commonly used by English teachers.

Susan reported that she had recently begun recording formative assessment interim levels of achievement in response to a changed system requirement:

80. T I only have started that this year because I realise now that the word now is apparently that we are obliged to take any sort of work, obliged to take any work regardless of when it’s submitted. So what I have done, and it’s a bit of bluff, is said well I’ve recorded your draft mark. I’m going to take the mark that I’ve got as of the due date so if I don’t get the final thing I’ll just take your draft mark. So that’s my way of trying to be fair. (Interview 2)

Susan reports that, informed by QSA requirements, the school’s assessment policy changed so that marks were to be recorded for each student in each subject. The policy to which she refers is Memorandum 91/04 (QSA, 2004), which outlined the need for documented evidence of student achievement for each piece of assessment in order to contribute to achievement levels at exit. If a student does not submit a final draft for summative assessment grading, Susan’s recorded formative assessment marks would be used for summative purposes. Susan views this as an equitable way of meeting QSA requirements that “oblige” her to accept student work regardless of whether students have met task submission date requirements. The interim grade provided with her formative feedback on drafts can therefore be used for summative purposes.

**Technology for formative purposes.** Susan shows preference for pen and paper written feedback and largely does not use technology for formative feedback purposes. When asked to comment on her use of technology in providing formative feedback she replied as follows:

214. T I find it easier just to-to me it’s more work to do to correct something on a screen, well maybe if you get used to it, but it’s easier to circle something and to, you know, write (1) notes, than it is to do it on a computer and underline bits that aren’t working or whatever. (Interview 1)

Here Susan can be heard reasoning that it is physically easier to provide feedback on written products, than that presented in digital form on a computer. When students email drafts, she responds using the tools available, but advises that this does not happen very often and it is not her preferred mode of feedback. No digital copies are made of student work for use in formative assessment activities, or for students to use for self-assessment. No on-line formative assessment tools are used.
The roles of Susan and her students in formative assessment: dependent relationships. Susan reports that she remains the sole source of feedback for improvement of students’ individual summative assessment pieces. For Susan, the ongoing dependence of her students is a feature of the Queensland system:

100. T I think we’ve created that system where they are dependent on us. I think it’s unfortunate, actually, but, I think we do a hell of a lot of spoon-feeding. (Interview 2)

This is in keeping with Susan’s view of students as dependent upon her expert knowledge and skills, responding to her feedback in order to improve. It is expected that submitted summative assessment pieces are the work of the student. However, Susan’s copy-editing interventions in the text, previously described, and emphasis on providing as many feedback opportunities as required by students, mean that summative assessment pieces are, to some extent, co-produced by her.

Susan’s view that students are dependent upon teachers in order to improve assumes that students do not develop editorial independence, or the evaluative expertise necessary to improve their own work. This contrasts with expectations about the increasing independence of students in system policy and school documents. Relevant sections from the Syllabus, reproduced in the SWP, acknowledge the usefulness of “timely and constructive feedback from teachers and peers”, but give priority to the classroom teacher assisting “students in developing editorial independence, using the criteria and standards to develop students’ self-evaluative expertise” (Plains SHS, 2004, p. 29). Feedback on summative assessment drafts is legitimated in the Syllabus but advice is given that it should be in response to a short section of the task and should not be, as outlined previously, continual feedback on written scripts.

When asked to consider the Syllabus assertion that students should take increasing responsibility for their own learning, reiterated in the SWP, Susan identified her concerns thus:

290. T Increasing responsibility for their own learning, I don’t know, in effect how, you know, for a lot of students that isn’t the case but I mean that certainly is the idea that’s the ideal, isn’t it, that’s what we’re moving towards at the end of Year 12. I try and give them less say in, at the end of Year 12, than I, in terms of feedback than I would in, at the beginning of Year 11. I, I really try to um, drum into them what we want and as they move towards, um, that gender, race and class thing where they do that’s done under exam conditions and they don’t get any feedback and I think that the one before then we don’t give as, we try and kind of loosen up a
Susan identifies her view that students should take increasing responsibility for their own learning as an ideal, asserting that this goal is not reached for many students. Elsewhere, Susan has indicated that she is willing to accept as many drafts as students are willing to produce, with an emphasis on ‘A’ level students accessing these opportunities. At the same time, according to Susan’s account above, in the latter half of Year 12 she does not “give them as much in terms of notes and things” (Interview 1, 290). In this way she adjusts the support over the year until the last summative piece, which is produced under examination conditions (see Table 14). The examination question is known to the students and they are permitted to take notes into the examination. This indicates that preparation for the examination has included some sort of response to the exam topic.

While Table 14 shows that no teacher assistance is to be provided, the description is ambiguous about whether this means no assistance prior to the examination, or no assistance in the examination.

Also of interest in this case is that while the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) provides clear advice that text production should be documented as part of summative assessment task requirements and conditions, unlike those discussed in Case report 1, Plains SHS summative assessment task sheets do not include this advice to students. Access to resources is therefore outlined in the Course Overview, but the role of others in students’ text production is not acknowledged.

Table 14

*Conditions of Summative Assessment Tasks in Year 12 English*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Opportunity for teacher feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 – semesters three/four</td>
<td>Written Imaginative: interior monologue</td>
<td>Examination conditions: unseen question; notes and novel permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written public text: analytical exposition/research task</td>
<td>Assignment conditions; opportunities for consultation; 4 lessons for drafting and consultation; free access to teacher input and modelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Opportunity for teacher feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spoken/signed: public text</td>
<td>Assignment conditions; at least 4 lessons for drafting and consultation; group discussions; free access to composition and editing tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public text: feature article</td>
<td>Assignment conditions: group discussions; free access to composition and editing tools; no more than two rough drafts for teacher feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spoken/signed: exposition/multimedia presentation</td>
<td>Assignment conditions; at least 4 lessons for drafting and consultation; access to in class resources and teacher input and modelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written: analytical/exposition</td>
<td>Examination conditions; notes allowed; known question; limited access to resources – no teacher assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spoken/signed: imaginative</td>
<td>Assignment conditions: in class resources and student (sic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-assessment and peer-assessment.** In keeping with her stated view that students are dependent upon her feedback to improve summative assessment grades, or to improve products in order to maintain a previously held grade, Susan does not prioritise peer- or self-assessment on summative assessment written drafts. Instead, she retains her direct influence on improvement of summative assessment written products, indicating that she prioritises the production of written summative assessment pieces, and written feedback for these items.

There is no systematic development of self-assessment skills across units, or an expectation that the majority of students will self-assess. This is not in her repertoire of reported practices and sits outside her view of her role as teacher in this high-stakes environment. The one exception to this is her generation of self-assessment checklists in some units of work. During the interview she indicated that she had used the checklist during whole class discussions about ‘A’ standard exemplars, but that this was not a regular practice.
Susan expresses doubt that all students utilise the checklist:

121. T So-so, the good kids will do it. I’m saying that. The kids that are motivated will do it. The other kids who will, you know, hand in a scrappy bit of paper are not much interested in check lists or really don’t have any concept of, you know. (Interview 1)

As discussed here, the use of the checklist is dependent on students’ levels of motivation to go beyond her provided feedback. Non-use of the self-assessment checklist is attributed by Susan to students’ lack of interest, or lack of understanding of how to improve their work. Despite the emphasis Susan gives in her talk to developing students’ ability to make judgements about standards, she does not specifically require students to use the criteria and standards to judge their own work:

112. R … the criteria that you come up with for them do you-do they ever look at their own work? Using that criteria?
113. T Er, no, I guess I haven’t had them do that. No. (Interview 1)

Susan’s criteria and standards are therefore not explicitly promoted for purposes beyond building understandings of standards. Susan does not require her students to utilise these documents for self-assessment purposes, or make links between their own work and these documents.

As indicated, Susan uses peer feedback regularly in her classroom during the content knowledge and skills development phase, with an emphasis on discussion in whole class and small groups in the earlier stages of each unit. Peer feedback also occurs informally and independently between students:

178. T … I notice that often they will go to the students who are the A students, that some of the students that struggle, will go to them, even in class in assignment preparation I’ll see them get up and walk over.
180. T I’ve sort of seen that happen outside of class too. (Interview 2)

In unplanned, uncontrolled interactions that are supplementary to the work of the classroom that she manages, Susan reports that students seek clarification from other students in her classroom, independently arranging peer feedback. Students also seek clarification from students in other classes.

Susan’s use of peer feedback on summative assessment pieces is restricted to rehearsals of sections of spoken presentation, where students are routinely given authority to provide feedback on their peers’ work. This practice has been discussed in detail earlier. While Susan provides written feedback on the written drafts of spoken performance scripts this is only part of the assessable criteria of a spoken performance.
Peer feedback allows students to see a range of standards of performance as well as provides multiple feedback opportunities for the performers. Despite Susan’s emphasis on providing interim marks she reports elsewhere that she does not encourage students to provide marks as part of their feedback to their peers due to the public nature of the activity.

**Access to routines of formative assessment for different groups.** The data shows clear differences between the formative assessment opportunities Susan provides for two groups of students: those who produce ‘A’ standard work and those who produce ‘C’ standard work. Grouped either on prior knowledge from teaching these students in Year 11, or on the emerging picture she gets of their ability level through the year, Susan describes the students’ engagement with formative assessment opportunities as being linked to their achievement level:

230. T  Aw, they don’t take much responsibility, apart from these kids that are very motivated, but they don’t take a hell of a lot of responsibility for their own work. I think they, (2) they present it and they expect you to fix it up. That’s—that’s the feeling that you get in most (2) I don’t that’s the case with some of these high achieving students I think … they actually engage and … they want to learn and … they’re internally motivated to constantly improve, um, but I think for a lot of kids…with the ‘C’ level kids, it’s about, okay, I’ve done my bit now you do yours. That—that’s my feeling. (Interview 1)

It is Susan’s view that students who do not make the connection between effort and achieved levels rely more heavily on her to intervene in their work in order to improve it. High achieving students, described elsewhere as “good students”, are characterised here as those who “actually engage” and want to learn; who are internally motivated to constantly improve. They are the type of students who perform the role in its idealised form. These are students who will “take responsibility” and access the feedback given to them by Susan. The other group, described above, consists of those students who are labelled as ‘C’ level students and who are less independent, or motivated. According to Susan, these students see her as responsible for correcting their work rather than diagnosing areas for improvement. As previously discussed, Susan’s rough draft feedback exemplars reveal emphasis is given to the explicit correction of technical errors. In this way, students’ expectations and Susan’s actions are consistent.

Conversely, while ‘C’ level students are dependent upon her feedback, Susan reports that they do not routinely attempt to access further feedback. ‘A’ level students do:
Um. I would, with the good students, I would probably, um, you know, they
would draft more than once. These students would come to you outside class
and get you to look at you know, um, look I’ve done this, I’ve added this bit,
what do you think of this? So there’s a lot of kind of informal, you know,
conversation and checking of work that happens in addition to you know the
draft they put in. (Interview 2)

‘A’ level students are, therefore, able to access formative feedback in a
combination of in class and out of class sites, with conversations taking place at the
staffroom door. This emphasises their dependence on Susan’s feedback to improve or
maintain their grades. In this description, independence is associated with access to
feedback and not with self-assessment, self-monitoring and the management of students’
own learning. Students instead are given agency to seek more help:

Yes, some will come to the staff room, the better kids will come eventually,
some will come and see you two or three times, just come to the door and
say “Can you just read through this, is this okay what I’ve changed?” and
blah, blah, blah. (Interview 2)

As can be seen in this excerpt, these students are involved in on-going feedback
loops with Susan, gathering feedback on several occasions, taking next steps, but then
verifying them against Susan’s authority as a teacher. These interactions are informal and
unplanned.

Susan reports that she is, in part, motivated by the aim of having her judgements
of student work verified at District Review Panel level, as discussed earlier. The number
of summative assessment drafts is not explicitly quantified in the Plains SHS SWP but
Susan reports that her practices sit outside expectations of the system. When asked if she
ever refused to accept further drafts from students, she replied in the negative, proffering
the view that “I suppose maybe I should, but I don’t” (1, 194). This practice works
against the notion of increasing independence promoted in the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b),
as discussed in Chapter 2, and the Plains SHS SWP (2004).

**Formative assessment for students with specific learning needs.** Susan’s
reported approach to formative assessment for students with specific learning needs is
restricted to the provision of additional written feedback on written summative
assessment rough drafts. She expresses uncertainty about a possible pathway to improvement for a ‘C’ level student who wanted to improve beyond that level:\(^\text{17}\)

108 T I don’t know how you make up that gap other than just, you know, helping him with drafting and whatever, and I don’t know that I am capable, actually, of getting him beyond a ‘C’, or a ‘C+', I think that really is his ...

110 T I know that may not be a popular thing to say, that some, but I feel that’s his ability level, um, and I don’t know other than drafting what I can do, other than asking them to do extra activities at home and things. (Interview 2)

Susan’s view has implications for students who are not achieving at the highest, or ‘A’ standard. As previously discussed, Susan identifies incremental improvement as possible, relative to ability. Susan describes above the pivotal role she has in improvement, but concedes that she is unsure how to “get” the student beyond his ability level. While Susan outlines an alternative of “extra activities at home and things”, she makes no indication that she has ever required this of any students or that these formative techniques are part of her repertoire of practice.

In Susan’s view, the school’s official position is that tasks may not be adjusted to meet the needs of individuals and she describes this as restricting her attempts to provide formative assessment opportunities for students with specific learning difficulties:

126. T Well, my understanding is that we aren’t able to modify their work for learning difficulty kids. And in senior we can’t modify work at all. I probably have asked some of them, at the moment I have a boy who is ASD. He’s not a learning difficulty, but he has difficulty in concentration. He has a case manager and I might consult with her on a reasonably regular basis like X needs, he hasn’t done this and he needs this, and you know, and if he’s at the homework centre can you have a look at his English assignment, or

127. R So he gets extra assistance then with-

128. T Yeah.

129. R And that would just be in preparing for his summative work?

130. T Yeah, that’s right, not in terms of formative work. (Interview 2)

These students are involved in all of the formative assessment opportunities Susan employs in class, with no adjustment of classroom tasks or assessment tasks. There is contact between Susan and the students’ case managers to advise when extra attention should be given. Susan restricts her attention to draft work in preparation for summative assessment pieces, but the case manager has a role to play when Susan identifies gaps in students’ learning. In addition to the student discussed above, diagnosed with Autism

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\(^\text{17}\) Students who produce individual assessment pieces judged to be at ‘C’ level in Year 12 will be awarded a ‘sound achievement’ in Senior English on exit from the course.
Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Susan also discussed a “learning difficulty 5” student, indicating that the student is ascertained with Moderate Intellectual Impairment. According to Education Queensland’s Ascertainment Policy and Revised Procedures: Students with Disabilities (2002), major program modification is deemed necessary for students at level 5. At a school level extra assistance is available for such students, who also work with a case manager.

Susan’s actions are limited by her understanding of the school position which she takes to be official. However, the Syllabus provides advice that special consideration for particular students might involve “alternative teaching approaches, assessment plans and learning experiences” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 29). The QSA produced policy document Special Consideration: Exemption and Special Arrangements in Senior Secondary School-based Assessment (QSA, 1994, revised 2004) also provides guidance that standard assessment requirements can be adjusted in reasonable circumstances. Both of these documents advise that the assessment criteria and standards are unable to be altered.

Part 4 – Key Findings of Case Report 2

Overall, from the case data and preceding analysis, there are seven key findings about Susan’s formative assessment practices, which are now discussed under the three main organising headings: the influence of contexts; purposes; and classroom assessment practices and social interactions. The key findings are presented in italics for organisation purposes.

The influence of contexts. The case report shows that while Susan practises formative assessment at the interface of system, school and classroom contexts, as discussed in Chapter 1, she gives priority to understandings of the nature and function of formative assessment formed in her local school context, and informed by her understanding of her role in the classroom. Susan’s boundary-crossing practices, like Ros’s, are complex. While Susan is required to “function competently in multiple contexts” (Walker & Nocon, 2007, p. 178) she is less participative in the system context than she is in the school context, and the context of her classroom. She operates at the interface of system, school and classroom contexts, but predominantly boundary-crosses between school and classroom as she takes up roles in both.

As a teacher in the Queensland system, she gives consideration to the regulatory requirements for assessment and moderation including requisite numbers of summative
assessment pieces, the use of assessment criteria and standards drawn from the published Exit Criteria and Standards, and collection of students’ summative assessment pieces in folios for Review Panel moderation procedures. She does this by following information she has about the system requirements made available by her HOD, but does not interact directly with external system bodies such as the QSA and District or State Review Panels, or documents, including Review Panel feedback and the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b). Despite this, she gives great weight to Review Panel requirements for approval of SWPs and moderation of schools’ evidence of students’ achievement levels.

For Susan, the system context does not have as strong or visible an influence as the context of the school where system requirements are established in the SWP, and realised through assessment documentation including summative assessment task sheets and accompanying statements of criteria and standards. In the school context, Susan’s understandings about the purposes of formative assessment are formed through social interactions with the HOD and other teaching colleagues during discussions of the preparation for, and production of summative assessment pieces. In part, the influence of Susan’s school context is strong because, unlike Ros, her teaching and evaluative experiences are restricted to her current school. There are no reported outside influences such as professional development training external to the school.

In the practice context of the classroom, the influence of system requirements and school interpretation intersect with her understanding of her role as a teacher which affects her understanding of the nature and function of formative assessment and its purposes, as well as her understanding of the role of students in formative assessment. The school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland system is interpreted by Susan as giving priority both to summative assessment and the production of summative assessment pieces in Year 12 Senior Schooling. This view is strongly reflected in Susan’s talk, her routinised formative assessment practices, and her interactions with her students for formative purposes.

*A chain of dependent relationships is identified in Susan’s accounts of practice.*

Susan has no direct authority at the level of local policy implementation and is therefore dependent upon her HOD for his interpretation of policy in the form of the SWP. She is dependent on her teaching colleagues for the shared understandings that are particular to their school context and does not critically engage with either the Syllabus or the SWP. While the HOD mediates the Syllabus Exit Criteria and Standards into assessment criteria and standards for Susan, she in turn mediates and interprets these for her students. She
identifies, and is recognised as having ownership of knowledge regarding assessment criteria and standards, which she retains and then interprets for her students. This ownership of knowledge manifests itself in the relationship between Susan and her students as feedback dependency, maintained by both parties. Susan’s behaviour is contradictory in regard to the use of assessment criteria and standards. She prioritises students’ understanding of standards, expectations of quality and task requirements, and provides regular opportunities for students to engage with her criteria and standards. Conversely, this does not include a deliberate focus on building self-assessment skills, and Susan has no expectation that students will monitor their own work.

**Purposes.** Susan identifies a clear emphasis on producing student work for summative assessment in Year 12 across the system, school and classroom contexts, which strongly influences her formative assessment practices. According to Susan formative assessment and summative assessment have clearly separate purposes. However, formative assessment is focused on rehearsal for summative assessment. Susan is reluctant to name any of her Year 12 activities as formative, and has the strongly held view that Year 11 assessment has a formative purpose, and Year 12 assessment has a summative purpose in this system. However, the analysis revealed that she gives weight to formative activities in the rehearsal and production of summative assessment pieces in her Year 12 classroom, maintaining a strong connection between her feedback and improvement.

Formative improvement evidence, therefore, takes the form of summative assessment grades awarded on end of unit, summative assessment pieces expressed as levels of achievement measured against the defined assessment criteria and standards. Such importance is given to documenting grades that Susan provides interim grades on written summative assessment drafts. In response to the summative assessment emphasis, Susan channels and focuses her formative assessment practices towards the production of summative assessment pieces, with her practices in the service of the final product and grade.

The Senior English Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) focuses on learning improvement, improvement of achievement, self-evaluative experience and increasing independence in Year 12. These understandings are replicated in the SWP. The analysis of Susan’s interview data reveals that at no time does she independently mention learning, or learning improvement. Furthermore, she indicates that her formative assessment
processes do not focus on learning separate from the preparation of summative assessment pieces. This does not mean that learning does not occur. Susan endeavours to construct knowledge with her students, through classroom pedagogical and formative practices such as discussions, student examination of exemplars, and responses to worksheets, and through one-on-one consultation and conversations about feedback on rough drafts. Despite this, it remains that heavy emphasis is given in Susan’s classroom to formative assessment as feedback on summative assessment written drafts, in the expectation that her feedback will improve the grade the piece would receive.

Summative, end-of-unit assessment items are for terminal, or grading purposes and as such contribute to reporting achievement on exit or completion of the two year course of study. The grade is recorded in each student’s folio profile and each assessment item is stored for possible inclusion in verification processes. While Susan makes general references to class performance on previous summative assessment tasks, feedback on these graded summative assessment pieces is not systematically used as feedforward to improve an individual student’s subsequent assessment pieces.

**Classroom assessment practices and social interactions.** Susan prioritises her own accountability for meeting summative assessment demands, but has full authority to practise formative assessment in her classroom in the manner that she does. Susan’s reliance on a set of routinised formative assessment practices developed over her more than 10 years of English teaching in the Queensland system is highlighted in the case report. She is singly focussed on moving from one summative assessment piece to another and her routinised formative assessment practices see her building students’ capabilities to produce summative assessment pieces. This involves four broad unit phases with two intensive work phases identified in the analysis: content knowledge and skills development for summative assessment; and summative assessment draft product improvement.

*There is no hard boundary between Susan’s pedagogical and formative assessment practices with formative feedback a feature of pedagogical strategies.* During the first of these two intensive work phases, she moves the students “as a group”, focusing on content knowledge and skills development. Emphasis is given to shared knowledge about key concepts and skills constructed through whole-class and small-group activities. Feedback is informal and verbal in response to student answers in discussions about texts based on teacher-set questions, student-generated ideas, exemplars
and other activities to rehearse skills. It is in the second phase of the unit that Susan focuses on providing feedback to individuals about their work, at first on student planning of summative assessment pieces shared through teacher/student conferences, and then formal written feedback provided on student drafts to improve summative assessment products for grading.

Susan generates classroom artefacts that have both pedagogical and formative purposes. Susan’s criteria and standards form part of a teaching strategy, but are also underpinned by the generation of knowledge of standards through students’ examination of exemplars and provision of peer and teacher feedback. Susan does not explicitly link this process to the development of a wide range of self-assessment skills. Students are not asked to engage with the assessment criteria and standards and Susan does not expect students to self-evaluate and improve independently of her. Indeed, the nature and extent of Susan’s feedback to students indicates that she has a contributory role in their summative assessment production. Student agency is restricted to decisions about whether to access extra feedback and whether to act upon the formative feedback provided by Susan.

In keeping with her view that she is responsible for supporting students to improve or maintain their grades, Susan is only partially compliant with policy parameters for formative assessment feedback and the increasing independence of students provided by both the Syllabus and the SWP. Analysis shows that Susan takes on the role of gap-closer, improving the quality of summative assessment products through the provision of multiple feedback opportunities. She thus has a contributory role in the production of students’ summative assessment pieces for grading.

Susan’s talk reveals a preference for assessment and feedback in the print mode and this determines that her feedback stays central to the improvement process. Greater priority is given to written summative assessment pieces and Susan’s written feedback on those items. Due to time constraints, spoken presentations cannot be fully rehearsed to attract teacher feedback on the whole performance, so Susan does not have the same control over the improvement process. Peers are therefore given the authority to provide feedback on rehearsals of sections of spoken presentations but Susan retains authority over the written script drafts of spoken presentations. Susan’s feedback is presented in written and spoken modes, with spoken feedback used to explicate the written. This mode dominance extends to the absence of digital media in formative assessment, including the very limited use of ICTs for feedback or self-assessment.
The determination of access to formative assessment opportunities for Susan’s students is tied to grades, with formative feedback made available differently to students of different achievement levels. While Susan controls the in class access to formative feedback she allows students to orchestrate additional feedback opportunities outside of the classroom. This difference between who routinely and regularly goes to see Susan out of the classroom seems to have equity implications. Opportunities for further feedback are actively taken up by Susan’s ‘A’ level students. This extra feedback is the mechanism for securing quality as expected by the review panel, a priority for maintaining students’ ‘A’ standard, expressed as a VHA level of achievement at verification. ‘A’ level students therefore have unrestricted access to her feedback, across sites and numbers of feedback opportunities.

Absent from Susan’s talk are references to the use of diverse formative assessment strategies for diverse groups of students. She reports that she has a culturally homogenous group, but that there are different learning needs within the class. She does not provide differentiated pedagogical or formative practices during the content knowledge and skills development phase to meet these needs, preferring instead to “keep them all at the same pace” (Interview 2, 166). Support for specific learning needs is provided in the form of feedback for individual students on summative assessment rough drafts, in keeping with Susan’s understanding that improvement is measured in terms of summative assessment grades. In the case of students who have been identified as having particular learning difficulties identified through the school, a role also exists for a case manager who is external to the classroom.

Susan’s formative assessment classroom practices are influenced by several tensions that she must manage. This leads to contradictions between the practices she describes and the view that she expresses of formative assessment in Senior English and her role in its enactment. The first is a tension in the way that she describes herself as the manager and dispenser of information, on the one hand, and yet reveals practices that involve her as a participant in knowledge construction that occurs through interactions in the classroom between Susan and her students, in small and large groups. What is consistent in her practices is the summative assessment focus. A second, related tension occurs because of her acute awareness of managing compliance issues, juxtaposed with her responsibility as a responsive practitioner. Compliance issues are met, in part, through her emphasis on responding to students, but also constrain her from reducing students’ dependency on her feedback.
Chapter 7 presents reflections drawn from the two cases, synthesised with the key messages identified in the review of the formative assessment literature.
Chapter 7: Reflections on the Cases

This chapter presents critical reflections on the case reports from Chapters 5 and 6. The reflections are structured under the three organising headings of the reports: 1) Influence of contexts; 2) Purposes of formative assessment; and 3) Classroom assessment practices and social interactions. The first of these sections addresses the influence of contexts on the nature and function of the teachers’ formative assessment practices. The second section concerns the influence of summative assessment on the purposes for which formative assessment is used in the teachers’ classrooms. The third section examines the teachers’ reliance on routines of formative assessment practice based on students’ dependence on teacher feedback for improvement.

The discussion synthesises the key findings from the case reports, while giving consideration to the key messages from the literature outlined in Chapter 3. A fourth section in this chapter reflects on the affordances of the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland system, providing observations about the extent to which those affordances have been met in the practices of the teachers in this study.

The Influence of Contexts

As indicated in Chapter 1, this study maintains a focus on assessment as contextualised practice. In particular, it probes the contextual influences on teachers’ formative assessment practices. Three interrelated contexts were identified in Chapter 1: the wider jurisdiction or system context, the local school context, and the classroom context. It was acknowledged in Chapter 1 that while the school site includes both the local school and the classroom, the practice context of the individual classroom has been examined as a separate context for analytic purposes. The case reports have shown that as formative assessment practitioners in Queensland Senior Schooling, these teachers operate at the interface of the three contexts. Considerations for high-stakes assessment associated with certification and exit from the two year course of study are expressed at the system level. They are also expressed at the local school level where the Senior English Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) is to be applied in ways that take account of the school make-up, including demographics. Further, in the classroom context these requirements are expressed in the assessment practices teachers enact and the priority given to summative assessment procedures. The study highlights the manner in which the
teachers engage with the contexts themselves, and the roles and relationships that they adopt relative to each context. A key focus is, therefore, how system and school requirements influence the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment classroom practices.

As outlined in Chapter 1, in this study teachers are understood to be engaged in boundary-crossing, demonstrating their ability to “function competently in multiple contexts” (Walker & Nocon, 2007, p. 178). The cases demonstrate that there is a dynamic interplay between the contexts, as experienced by the individual teacher. The teachers’ accounts highlight the nature and extent to which each context influences their formative assessment practices as they take account of the complex characteristics of the contexts separately and in combination, giving different relative emphases to each context and their roles within each context. Therefore, the interface of the three interrelated contexts does not occur at a fixed or common point for both teachers; both teachers boundary-cross in ways that are meaningful to them.

The teachers’ formative assessment practices are influenced by a number of contextual elements. These elements include relationships with English Department Heads, groups and individuals external to the classroom, and students in the classroom. These elements also include teachers’ views of their role in the classroom; their understanding of the use of assessment documents provided in the school; their understanding of system requirements in relation to the preparation of students to complete summative assessment items and the processes involved with external moderation; and their autonomy to practise formative assessment in the classroom.

The *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) has an authoritative position as the statement of policy for teacher use. It provides official expectations of practice and teacher responsibilities in delivering an assessment program that meets Syllabus objectives. In their accounts both teachers acknowledge the influence of the system, and refer to system expectations expressed in the Syllabus for meeting assessment requirements associated with summative assessment for certification purposes in Year 12 English. They also acknowledge that their role is to attend to system requirements for meeting curriculum and assessment requirements as applied in their local school and set out in the SWP. In Queensland it is understood that the school context has a strong shaping influence on teachers’ work as they are expected to engage with the SWP.

The cases show the school-specific details of the curriculum and assessment in the Course Overview and assessment documents including assessment criteria and standards,
and task specifications directly influence teachers’ practices. Within each school, the extent to which the SWP is viewed as an authoritative document for teacher use influences teachers’ attitudes to this school-specific application of policy. The classroom context is the site of practice, where teachers provide opportunities for formative assessment for improvement purposes to their Year 12 students. It is in the classroom that teachers have some level of autonomy in how they practise formative assessment, but this is informed by system and school requirements. Their actions are heavily influenced by the range of elements mentioned above, and their common understanding that summative assessment production is prioritised in Year 12 English.

In response to assessment requirements determined at the school level, the case reports show the teachers generate documents for use in classrooms which are reflective of their understandings of: formative assessment in subject English; the system, school and student focus on assessment; and the pedagogical routines that they adopt to ensure students have the content knowledge and skills to produce summative assessment pieces. In the context of their own classrooms, the teachers make decisions about the use of such documents based on their individual, prior evaluative experience, understanding of the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy of subject English, and the responsibility they have to design and carry out formative assessment in this setting.

The result is that in the context of their classrooms there are instances where they decide to depart from practices that are prioritised in the Syllabus in respect of the expectation that official assessment criteria and standards will be used as a tool to develop students’ evaluative expertise. Instead, they substitute an unofficial set. Further, the cases show how they maintain students’ dependence upon their feedback, while being responsive to individual students and parental expectations. While it is an expectation of the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced system that system, school, and classroom contexts are related and mutually supportive, the teachers’ accounts reveal a tension between meeting external requirements, and their practice of formative assessment in the classroom.

Black and Wiliam (2003) described their 1998 review as “concerned with such issues as students’ perceptions, peer- and self-assessment, and the role of feedback in a pedagogy focused on learning” (p. 628). In their view, this represented a change in focus in the published writing on formative assessment from the consideration of formative assessment in relation to systems and the relationship between formative and summative assessment, to the consideration of formative assessment as a classroom process. This
view is pertinent to this discussion of the Queensland system, where the relationship between formative assessment and summative assessment is a core tenet of the system, and the consideration of formative assessment as a classroom process involving defined criteria and standards and the development of students’ evaluative expertise, the increasing independence of the student, and the production of drafts for teacher feedback for improvement purposes are given weight in the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b).

Despite the shift in the research focus identified by Black and Wiliam (2003), institutional and policy contexts are shown in the literature to be strong influences on teachers’ classroom assessment practices (Black et al., 2003; Klenowski, 2004, Pryor & Crossouard, 2007). The review of literature presented empirical evidence from other countries that indicated there remains a tension between system policy and local school practices, including those that occur in the classroom (Birenbaum et al., 2011; Laveault, 2010; Lee, 2007). The cases revealed tensions realised in Queensland between the views the teachers hold about their roles across the system, school and classroom contexts in relation to the parameters and setting for formative assessment practices in Year 12 English.

In her discussion of the use of assessment information to regulate educational activities, Allal (2010) described sources of regulation in the learning environment. Throughout the interrelated contexts discussed above, multiple sources of regulation are evident. Formative assessment is regulated in the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b), where statements about the purpose and function of formative assessment are provided for teachers. Formative assessment is regulated in the school, where emphasis on summative assessment is expressed in the importance given to moderation procedures by teachers, the production of summative assessment items outlined in SWPs, and the views of parents. Where there is an established partnership between the school and parents, this also acts as a source of regulation, as teachers provide formative feedback for improvement mindful of the need to be accountable for students’ summative assessment grades. As already discussed, within their classrooms teachers have freedom to decide on their formative assessment and pedagogical practices. In turn, they regulate formative assessment practices in ways that respond to the emphasis on summative assessment item production. Formative assessment practice is wholly integrated into their pedagogy for this purpose.
Relationships in contexts: English department head and parents. In both schools formative assessment practices are influenced by the power relationships between the teachers and their English Department Heads. Both teachers report a lack of authority to influence the application of policy expectations in the school context, and a reliance on their English Department Heads for the top-down delivery of the SWP. In the cases reported here, the English Department Heads retain sole authority for their construction of their respective SWPs and therefore mediate understandings about formative assessment in this school context for the teachers. Both teachers report that they, in turn, interpret and mediate the official assessment metalanguage, the assessment criteria and standards, for their students. Access to the respective SWPs is different in each case, as is the reliance on shared understandings with colleagues about formative assessment purposes and practices. Susan did not have her own copy of the SWP, and focuses in her talk on shared English department understandings. Conversely, Ros has her own copy of the SWP but maintains that she holds different expectations about the central role of formative assessment in Senior English from those of her teacher colleagues and English Department Head.

Broadfoot (1996) described a role for parents in the social practice of assessment, but the literature as yet presents no clearly defined and established role for parents in how formative assessment is carried out in secondary schooling. However, there has been a focus in the literature over time on parents’ concerns with summative assessment, including grading and reporting (Black, 1998; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen, 2005; Harlen & James, 1997; OECD, 2005a; Sadler, 1986f). An emerging field of research provides empirical evidence that parents are willing to take up the role of supporting their secondary school students’ learning at home (Hutchinson & Young, 2011; Shulha & Wilson, 2010). In Queensland, while parents are described as the receivers of feedback on student achievement, they are also given an official role in formative assessment. As outlined in Chapter 2, others’ feedback, including that of parents, is legitimated in the Syllabus. However, the cases reveal that the opportunity for parent engagement is not taken up in the manner described in the Syllabus. While Susan is silent on the role of parents in formative assessment, Ros describes parents as firmly focused on grades. She reports that this influences the nature and function of her formative assessment feedback on summative assessment drafts.

The case studies show that the influence of parents over teachers’ formative assessment practices is linked to the school site-specific institutional partnerships between
schools and parents. St. Catherine’s College SWP (2003) formally and specifically acknowledges the role of parents in formative assessment. Conversely, Plains SHS SWP (2004) acknowledges the role of others in feedback, but did not describe a specific role for parents.

**Understanding of role as teacher and the influence of prior evaluative expertise.** In describing their roles as teachers, Ros and Susan provide insights into the complexity of the high-stakes assessment environment in Year 12 English. Ros describes herself as a translator and as a filter; images that fit with her classroom practices as she translates assessment criteria for students, and filters information in class discussions and about student performance. Susan describes herself as a manager and controller, an expert who dispenses knowledge. Both images relate to the control she strives to maintain over improvement in the form of her feedback. However, this self-image denies the emphasis on shared knowledge construction in her pedagogical routines. She moves between the idea of the teacher as guide and counsellor and the image of the teacher “as provider of information” (Broadfoot, 1996, p. 63).

The case studies show that teachers’ prior evaluative expertise appears to influence their understanding of their role as a teacher, their engagement with system and school requirements, and their formative assessment practices in the classroom. The teachers’ situated, contextualised practices are, in part, informed by their individual understandings of what it means to be an effective teacher gained through their respective experiences. The roles the teachers described, above, are reflected in the classroom pedagogical and assessment practices that they take to be routine, their formative assessment interactions with students, and their use of school-specific assessment documents. Ros’s wide variety of experiences as classroom assessor and teacher in different schools, sectors and assessment systems features in her discussion of the decisions she makes about formative assessment in her classroom. Conversely, Susan’s limited evaluative experience appears to reflect her focus on what is relevant in her current school, based on understandings about formative assessment formed in this school. The teachers’ formative assessment practices are therefore both situated and historical, shaped by their prior teaching and assessment histories in the same and different school contexts.
Purposes

As outlined in Chapter 2, formative assessment and summative assessment are understood to be dual, complementary purposes in Queensland Senior Schooling (McMeniman, 1986). The available literature about the Queensland system reveals that it is understood that formative assessment feedback has a role in teachers’ judgements about student achievement levels, and summative assessment feedback has a role in contributing to improved learning (Maxwell, 2004). The case studies show clearly that Ros and Susan enact formative assessment for the purpose of improving summative assessment pieces, viewed as high-stakes products. The teachers report that formative assessment and summative assessment are distinct assessment purposes, the former associated with rehearsal and improvement and the latter with the recording of grades. However, the two purposes have a strong relationship. Formative assessment is subservient to summative assessment, that is, it occurs in the service of meeting summative assessment requirements associated with the award of grades that contribute directly to achievement on the completion of the course. Priority is given to gathering summative assessment data that contributes to judgement of student achievement on exit from the course. In this setting, where assessment purposes are officially considered to be complementary, but where there is a clear focus on meeting summative assessment purposes, the evidence of improvement from formative assessment is summative assessment grades.

The teachers report the dominant influence of summative assessment requirements comes from the system policy presented in the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) and communicated to schools through the processes of District and State Review Panels. It is also the focus of teacher planning, as outlined in the Syllabus, with the reported main focus of each unit of work on the production of summative assessment pieces recognised as contributing to certification on exit or completion of course requirements. This dominant influence is reflected in the school through the SWP written by the English Department Head, where information is provided in each Course Overview about the sequence of units of work, the general objectives to be met in each unit, details of the assessment tasks to be completed, and the conditions for assessment.

The inclusion of formative assessment approaches in the Course Overview differs between the two schools. Both schools provide information in the Course Overview about the conditions under which each end of unit assessment piece will be produced, including
access to resources. The overview includes possible learning experiences, particularly focused on essential knowledges and skills, but references to assessment requirements are restricted to items treated as summative, which occur at the end of units of work, and are understood to contribute to summative certification decisions. St. Catherine’s College SWP (2003) describes the number of summative assessment drafts allowed for each assessment piece and the nature of feedback to be provided by the teacher on drafts. The summative assessment task specification sheets also include information about the expected number of drafts and progress check dates. These formative assessment processes are documented by the students on this sheet and are submitted with completed items for grading. The Plains SHS Course Overview (Plains SHS, 2004) provided information about the conditions of summative assessment tasks, but did not specifically make reference to formative assessment processes. No formative approaches, activities or pieces to be produced as part of each unit are documented in the Plains SHS Overview.

As indicated in Case report 1, Ros views the system’s summative assessment demands as inflexible, remarking that it “has to be that way”. It is important to note that the summative assessment procedures, including the defined standards, Syllabus requirements and moderation and verification Panel procedures ensure the validity and reliability of this school-based system (Cumming & Maxwell, 2004). While there are parameters in place for school application of policy into classroom practice, these are associated with quality assurance and the equitable delivery and assessment of curriculum across the state of Queensland. Both teachers take decisions about the safe storage of student folios that preclude students’ use of their completed, graded summative assessment pieces for on-going formative assessment purposes associated with improvement of future learning, despite Ros’s stated strong stance that the “educational value” of the pieces is lost. This teacher preferred practice is not a system requirement. This is discussed further in relation to the affordances of the Queensland system.

The review of literature revealed that high-stakes qualifications that combine school-based and external testing strongly influence what is taught and how because teachers want to secure good results for their students (Black, 2001; Black et al., 2003; Hume & Coll, 2009). The review of literature provides little evidence of the influence of

18 In 2011 there were 1,708 schools in Queensland. Of this number, 251 were secondary schools and 243 combined primary/secondary schools (Office of Economical and Statistical Research, 2012).
high-stakes, wholly school-based summative assessment on teachers’ classroom formative assessment practices. The case studies reveal that in this system, where teachers are responsible for both summative assessment and formative assessment, summative assessment exerts downward pressure on formative assessment practices in the classroom and teachers frame their formative assessment practices to address summative assessment requirements. Reflected in the case reports is the view that all work in a unit is “work on an assessable task” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 25), from the introduction of the summative assessment task at the beginning of each unit of work, to the development and/or improvement of skills required to produce summative assessment products through to the production and improvement of these items.

The analysis of the case studies reveals that teachers’ understanding of learning in subject English in Year 12 is influenced by this identified focus on summative assessment, so that summative assessment readiness comes to be the ultimate goal. A key message from the literature outlined in Chapter 3 was that formative assessment is strongly associated with improvement purposes, with significant gains claimed in many studies. These gains are expressed both as learning gains and the raising of student achievement (ARG, 2002a; Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2001; Black et al., 2003; Cowie, 2005a; Marshall & Wiliam, 2006; Sadler, 1989; Wiliam et al., 2004). As mentioned, there is no single definition of what constitutes improvement evidence in the literature. Moreover, the evidence of improvement is not restricted to marks or scores, or associated solely with summative assessment grades.

The literature indicates generally that marks and grades on students’ summative assessment pieces have limited utility for meeting formative assessment purposes associated with improvement (Black & Wiliam, 2004; Roos & Hamilton, 2005). Further to this, grades are seen to have a negative effect in subject English with specific research showing that marks control students’ responses to other feedback (Belanger, 2004). However, Biggs (1998) contested Black and Wiliam’s view (1998) that summative assessment does not lead to improvement in the same way as formative assessment and their exclusion of summative assessment from their review of formative assessment research. He argued instead that grades could act as valuable feedback when based “on a qualitatively derived hierarchy” (1998, p. 108). The key to this assertion is that the student must have a working knowledge of the hierarchy. Students’ development of working knowledge of the qualitatively derived assessment criteria and standards based on exit criteria is a key tenet of the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b). In effect,
students are understood to be reliant on the assessment metalanguage to improve. As has been shown in the Case reports, and discussed earlier, rather than developing a working knowledge of the assessment criteria and standards, the students are instead reliant upon their teachers to interpret and mediate the assessment metalanguage, in part by maintaining control over feedback for improvement purposes.

In keeping with the strong connection made between grades and improvement in these Case reports, it is revealed that grades feature in students’ understanding of their performance. Further, grades are used by teachers as part of their feedback on summative assessment drafts. The Case reports indicate that the grades are used by these teachers in complex ways including: as representing the levels of achievement expressed in task-specific assessment criteria and standards; as a means of identifying the characteristics of these standards for students and parents; and as a strategy for collecting summative assessment grades based on draft work if students do not go on to complete final summative assessment pieces. As can be seen in the cases, these strategies are, in part, put in place because students do not have a working knowledge of the assessment criteria and standards, and the grade becomes a further piece of feedback for students to clarify the level of their current work. The case reports also present the possibility that students’ inconsistent experience with this framework for measuring quality means that the grades become a priority goal in themselves.

Formative assessment is not generally associated with accountability in the literature. However, close reported association of formative assessment and summative assessment purposes in the data means that, in the main, these teachers appear to use formative assessment in the Queensland system to meet the perceived summative assessment accountability demands of the system. High-stakes Senior Schooling is recognised as focussing teacher attention on final course grades (Brookhart & Bronowicz, 2003; Hume & Coll, 2009; Stobart, 2008). In systems that feature external testing as well as classroom-based assessment (Hume & Coll, 2009), concerns are expressed that formative assessment purposes tend to be subsumed to summative assessment purposes, with teachers feeling compelled to “teach to the test”; that is, teachers are highly focused on test performance, as opposed to the goals of learning or developing understanding (Black et al., 2003; Harlen, 2005; OECD, 2005a).

While test preparation is not a dominant concern in Queensland, the case reports reveal that in the context of school-based assessment it is evident that formative assessment becomes a mechanism for improving summative assessment grades at the
level of individual items. In Year 12, the teachers’ emphasis is on a succession of items that ultimately will be used to determine overall achievement at the end of the course. There is an expectation that students have had experience with assessment techniques earlier in the two year course of study. Year 11 is therefore considered to have a rehearsal function and the case reports demonstrate some links between Year 11 assessment techniques and those used in Year 12 to provide evidence that contributes to summative assessment grades on exit. Further, Year 11 data in the form of grades is accessible to teachers of Year 12 students. The cases show that in Year 12 the assessment items for individual units become stand-alone, with the teachers reporting little opportunity to use students’ graded summative assessment items formatively for carry-forward improvement of future learning in any systematic way.

While the system emphasises the agency of teachers in quality assessment practice, this loses traction as they focus on the production of summative assessment items, and specifically on the improvement of grades on these items. Their different concerns include the numbers of assessment items required (Susan), and the level of complexity of the tasks (Ros). They report a lack of time to use formative assessment to develop their students in ways that they believe are essential in English, and that they must focus exclusively on the complex work associated with preparing students for summative assessment tasks. Despite the teachers’ concerns about the emphasis on summative assessment production, analysis of the Syllabus documents indicated that there has been a decrease in the number of assessment pieces required of Year 12 English students over a period of years. The previously-endorsed English Senior Syllabus, produced in 1987, required students to produce 9 to 11 summative assessment tasks. This was reduced to 7 to 8 tasks in the 2002 English Senior Syllabus.

For these teachers, the decreased numbers of summative assessment tasks has not provided sufficient time for learning other than that which occurs as part of summative assessment preparation. The focus on single summative assessment items means that far less attention is given to learning over time, or generalised learning in the subject area and beyond. The issue of lack of time in secondary classrooms for formative assessment practices is identified in the international research literature and is not restricted to this system. Secondary teachers widely report that a major barrier to the use of formative assessment practices is the difficulty in slowing the pace of instruction “when trying to guide a class through important and extensive curriculum requirements” (OECD, 2005a, p. 69). In the Queensland system, this instruction comprises “important and extensive”
curriculum requirements including preparation for, and assessment of, key curriculum elements.

**Classroom Assessment Practices and Social Interactions**

The case reports reflect the common understanding in the research literature that there is a close association between pedagogy and formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Shepard, 2005). The latter is likened to instructional scaffolding (Shepard, 2005), and situated “at the boundary between classroom assessment and teaching” (Carless, 2007, p. 172). Black and Wiliam (1998) further described formative assessment as “an essential component of the pedagogic process” (p. 10). In keeping with the understandings outlined above, the teachers’ pedagogical routines are focused on providing formative opportunities relative to summative tasks, and all pedagogical activities provide opportunities for teacher feedback. Both teachers reported a primary purpose, which for them is to provide opportunities for students to improve relative to summative assessment grades. They report that quality pedagogy reaches this aim.

The analyses of the data for both cases indicate that each teacher employs formative assessment routines. The purpose of these routines is to first develop students’ content knowledge and skills so that they can produce summative assessment items in the latter half of the unit. Second, draft items are produced and improved for submission in the case of written and spoken assignments, and examination products drafted and/or rehearsed. The analyses reveal that the routines are similar across the two cases, but two key differences exist. First, there is a difference in the teachers’ approaches to planning their formative assessment practices. Ros reports that her formative assessment practices are emergent rather than fixed, an approach that is reflective of the formative assessment literature that views adjustment of teaching and learning as characteristic of subject English classrooms (Hodgen & Marshall, 2005; Moni et al., 2003). This aspect of Ros’s practice contrasts with Dorman and Knightly’s view (2006) that it was doubtful teachers use formative assessment strategies to inform planning and teaching. However, Dorman and Knightly’s view is consistent with Susan’s reported approach in pre-planning and setting her pedagogic formative routines, and moving her class “as a group” through to the preparation of summative assessment items. Both teachers report that the focus on summative assessment production in each unit of work is fixed, determined by system processes.
Second, there is a difference in the emphasis given to improvement of individuals’ work across each unit. Consistent with her strongly held view about the role of the teacher in improvement, Ros provides multiple opportunities for written feedback for improvement of individuals’ knowledge and skills required to produce summative assessment items. Susan instead prioritises the development of shared knowledge and skills. Individual improvement occurs only in the planning and drafting of summative assessment items.

It is evident from their individual descriptions of their units of work that both teachers use a range of formative assessment practices including, but going beyond, written feedback. However, as noted, both teachers regard their written feedback as essential for improving pieces for summative assessment. The case reports reveal an emphasis on verbal teacher feedback during classroom whole-class and small-group discussions in response to teacher-generated tasks and handouts. The strong emphasis on discussion reflects the view that discussion is an essential pedagogical element of subject English, and ultimately drives the direction of the lesson (Applebee et al., 2003; Marshall, 2007; Sawyer, Ayers, & Dinham, 2000).

There is a strong emphasis in the cases on the production of documents as part of teachers’ formative assessment practices and the use of documents for formative assessment purposes. The use of these documents reflects the teachers’ individual understanding of their role, the system, the focus on summative assessment preparation and the improvement of summative assessment products, and the central place of teacher feedback in improvement. Within the classroom, teachers control assessment documents, making choices about the use and non-use of school-produced documents intended for formative assessment purposes as well as summative assessment purposes such as grading and reporting on student achievement.

The role of the teacher, according to the Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) and subject English-specific formative assessment literature (Marshall, 2004, 2006; Marshall & Wiliam, 2006) is to develop students’ increasing independence from the teacher by developing their understandings of quality and how to progress in English through a range of examples of quality. According to the Syllabus, the teachers’ role is also to assist students to understand and use documents independently, including task specifications and accompanying assessment criteria and standards. Both teachers produce classroom documents including exemplars and alternative criteria and standards to demonstrate quality performance and induct students into knowledge about some standards of quality.
and task requirements. The criteria and standards that the teachers generate reflect their personal view of what is valuable in any given task. They do not have one-to-one correspondence with the official assessment criteria and standards. The teachers demonstrate understanding of the purpose of criteria and standards, but do not adhere to system principles associated with the use of the official assessment metalanguage with students in classrooms. They mediate and interpret, but do not develop a role for students in independently using either their mediated criteria and standards or the official assessment criteria and standards. The teachers do not prioritise the use of either to specifically develop students’ self-assessment capabilities. This contrasts with an emerging field of research providing empirical evidence that training students in the use of self-assessment techniques associated with explicit criterial knowledge results in significant gains (McDonald & Boud, 2003; Kirton et al., 2007, Rust et al., 2003), discussed further in this chapter in relation to the roles of teachers and students in formative assessment.

As outlined in Chapter 3, little is known about how teachers employ informal formative assessment such as observations and consultations in high-stakes settings where classroom formative processes contribute to summative assessment grades. The Syllabus provides teachers with advice that observations, consultations and focused textual analysis are all techniques that can be used to provide students with information about their language use. A clear stipulation is made that only textual analysis can be used for summative purposes for verification in Year 12 English. The case reports indicate that teachers give great emphasis to feedback on textual analysis for improvement, and that observations and consultations feature in informal drafting lessons. In keeping with Ros’s “emerging” unit phases, observations and consultations can lead to adjustments in the immediate direction of drafting lessons, and the provision of other resources in response to student needs. In both cases, during consultations students are given feedback on their initial ideas that inform their planning and production of summative assessment drafts. While consultation data do not directly inform grading, progress checks occurring as part of Ros’s consultation process are ultimately recorded on summative assessment task specification sheets as a formal part of the assessment process. The progress checks do not contribute to the summative assessment grade. Neither teacher reports recording observation data for use as part of grading.
**Teachers’ central role in formative assessment.** Both teachers prioritise opportunities for students to access written teacher feedback to improve summative assessment products, and this is consistent with the legitimate place of teachers and others in the preparation of students’ summative assessment pieces in this system. As already indicated, grade improvement is the evidence of achievement in this environment. However, improvement is linked not just to single feedback events, but is identified as occurring when students engage with the available range of frequent formative opportunities involving verbal and written teacher feedback in a unit of work, with an emphasis on the written feedback on summative assessment drafts. Improvement occurs, therefore, in a series of interactions between teacher and student.

The review of literature highlighted contestations about feedback modes in formative assessment, but in subject English it is understood that multiple, recurring formative assessment interactions in written and verbal modes should occur during English lessons (Peterson & McClay, 2010). The case reports show that the teachers are responsive to students’ needs through informal, frequent verbal interactions with small groups and whole class in the first of the intensive work phases (Phase 2) of units of work. Ros also provides written feedback on individuals’ homework tasks. The purpose of these tasks is to develop and improve the knowledge and skills necessary to complete summative assessment tasks. Informal, frequent verbal interactions provide additional feedback to the formal, written feedback that individuals receive in relation to summative assessment drafts in the second intensive work phase (Phase 3, highlighted in Case reports 1 and 2). This feedback is accessible, as identified by Carless (2007), immediate, and throughout a unit of work (Black, 1998; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black et al., 2004; Bloom et al., 1971; Shavelson et al., 2004; Sliwka & Spencer, 2005).

The exclusive focus on teacher written feedback for improvement is removed when assessment is produced in the spoken mode. As outlined earlier, the *English Senior Syllabus* (QBSSSS, 2002b) requires students to complete 7 to 8 summative assessment tasks during Year 12. Of these, 4 to 5 are written items, and 2 to 3 are spoken/signed. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in order for students to be awarded a minimum Sound Achievement at exit from the course, their folio must demonstrate that they meet the standards descriptors for this Achievement Level in both written and spoken/signed tasks. Students’ dependence upon teacher feedback is reduced and the roles of teacher and students change. Both teachers report that opportunities for students to receive their feedback are reduced when assessment is delivered in the spoken/signed mode, as the
opportunity for students to receive teacher feedback on rehearsals of spoken presentations is restricted by time availability. The teachers instead prioritise written feedback on written scripts of oral presentations. In addition they choose to provide peer-assessment opportunities, with peer feedback an alternative source of information for students. This is in contrast with the ownership both teachers maintain over feedback for written summative assessment pieces.

The case study data reveals that there is a continuing dominance of traditional models of written and verbal feedback to the exclusion of formative assessment including feedback using digital means. Both teachers report that they prefer to use pen-and-paper means of feedback. Digital versions of learning are not a feature of the teachers’ practices, with neither teacher using digital tools for formative purposes in the classroom. The literature clearly indicates that digital tools are increasingly providing for formative assessment needs, including peer- and self-assessment considerations associated with students’ use of on-line tools to improve their performance (Buchanan, 2000; Jenkins, 2004; Peat & Franklin, 2002; Webb, 2010). The study provides an opening to consider the use of digital folios for formative assessment purposes in subject English, including self-assessment. While using technology is listed as a key competency of the Syllabus, little guidance is given for teachers of Senior English in the Syllabus as to the use of technology for formative purposes.

**Increasing independence.** The teachers identify their central role in the provision of feedback in the high-stakes environment of Year 12 as a system requirement, and understand that the submission of drafts of summative assessment tasks is legitimated in the Syllabus and the respective SWPs. However, it is expected that teacher feedback will also “identify the students’ strengths and weaknesses so students may improve their achievement and better manage their own learning” (QBSSSS, 2002b, p. 21). The foregrounding of student management of their own learning is central to this assessment system. It is based on one of the purposes that underpinned ROSBA, that standards-referenced assessment would enable students to assess their own learning and provide information to correct deficiencies in learning.

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19 Also referred to as the Mayer Key Competencies, these are generic skills of subjects required to be identified in each Senior Syllabus (Gilbert & Macleod, 2006).
As indicated in Chapter 2, it is generally understood in the literature that the teacher enables students through feedback and the induction of students into ways to improve independently of the teacher. The students’ continued dependence on teacher feedback does not reflect the literature on formative assessment generally, or in subject English specifically, which finds that in this particular subject, the aim of formative assessment is to “enable pupils to become independent learners” (Marshall & Wiliam, 2006, p. 4). Writing about their research conducted as part of KMOFAP in England, Marshall and Wiliam (2006) found that the “learner develops the capabilities him/herself” through the process of “scaffolding” that occurs through interactions with peers and teachers (p. 4). The role of the student in managing their own learning is viewed widely in the literature as characteristic of subject English and literacy studies (Davies, 2003; Johnston & Costello, 2005; van Kraayenoord, 1994).

The case reports reveal that the teachers’ responses to student independence are contradictory. While one of the teachers regularly makes available opportunities for students to build evaluative expertise in looking at examples of quality against criteria that she has generated (although not the official assessment criteria and standards), and the other builds some capacity for recognising quality, neither teacher has the expectation that this will lead to self-monitoring and independence in the majority of their learners. That teachers do not take the next step of explicitly supporting learners in self-assessment, works against the understanding that the promotion of “pupil autonomy” is an underlying principle of formative assessment (Marshall & Drummond, 2006).

Stobart’s understanding (2008) that school-based assessment provided the opportunity for formative assessment and summative assessment to function as “part of a loop” was based on student use of teacher feedback against detailed, levelled outcomes statements to work towards subsequent levels. The case studies show that the lack of opportunity for students to build the necessary knowledge about assessment criteria and standards, and teachers’ emphasis on the security of summative assessment items, discussed earlier, both reduce the potential for students to improve their own work.

The case studies reveal that this response to student self-assessment is influenced by several factors: the teachers’ expectation that students will not self-assess, maintaining instead their dependence upon their teacher’s feedback for improvement; the teachers’ reported claim that parents expect the teacher to provide feedback for improving grades; their stated concerns that the language used in the assessment criteria and standards is so complex as to prevent students from engaging with these documents to improve their own
work; each teacher’s view of their role in the classroom relative to their understanding of how students best improve and their role in meeting summative assessment system and school requirements. However, as already noted, studies that have found positive results in student achievement and attributed these to self- and peer-assessment processes, in the main, involved interventions designed to develop such skills and featured specific training for teachers and students (Kirton, et al., 2007; Rust, et al., 2003). Neither teacher in the case reports explicitly or routinely teaches students how to self-assess. This is consistent with a traditional view of assessment as central to teacher authority.

Criteria and standards and teacher mediation of assessment language. The case reports show that teachers provide access to assessment criteria and standards, which are distributed to students, but in neither classroom do students engage directly with the actual assessment criteria and standards that teachers are required to use to judge the quality of their work. As indicated in Chapter 2, the Queensland system is clearly focused on the use of assessment criteria and standards based on subject-specific, defined “exit” standards to serve summative assessment purposes and formative assessment purposes. They are used to measure student achievement and feature in instruction, the improvement of learning and the fostering of self-evaluative expertise, in addition to their use in judgements (Wyatt-Smith, 2001). The use of standards is recognised as a significant component of formative assessment in the Queensland system, and is considered to be a key practice. The Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b) describes the assessment criteria and standards as a tool for students and teachers to use to develop student evaluative expertise and, ultimately, increasing independence. However, the case reports reveal that this is not fully evident in practice.

A key message of the review of literature is that the use of defined standards for improvement is contested, with opposing positions taken on what constitutes reference levels. Black and Wiliam defined feedback broadly in their 1998 review, presenting the idea that feedback need not measure a performance against a reference standard, while Sadler (1989) promoted the use of defined standards and carefully chosen exemplars illustrative of standards to inform feedback and student improvement. The subject English-specific formative assessment literature presents particular concerns about the use of defined criteria and standards. As discussed in Chapter 3, Marshall (2004, 2006) described progress in English as towards an horizon. According to Parr and Timperley (2010), it is possible that narrow criteria cannot measure progress in English. In relation
to the use of explicit criteria in formative assessment, other contestations included stated concerns about criterial compliance (Sadler, 2007, 2010; Torrance, 2007), and the mismatch of criteria with formative assessment and learning in the classroom (Harlen & James, 1997).

The review of literature revealed that a lack of clarity in assessment criteria was an impediment to secondary students’ use of self-assessment (Broadfoot et al., 1988). The importance of clarity and transparency of assessment criteria was emphasised in research showing strong connections between learning, student self-assessment and explicit criteria (Black et al., 2000; Frederiksen & Collins, 1989; Kirton et al., 2007; OECD, 2005a; Rust et al., 2003; Sadler, 1989; Shepard, 2000). The cases reveal that the language demands of assessment terminology, in particular the terminology associated with the Syllabus Exit Criteria and Standards, present barriers to the teachers’ and students’ use of the official assessment criteria and standards for formative assessment purposes.

Both teachers therefore mediate the language of assessment for their students. Susan does this formally through the use of substitute criteria that she generates herself with the result that students build “guild knowledge” (Sadler, 1989), through experience with examples of quality. The development of guild knowledge is considered routine practice in subject English (Marshall, 2004, 2006) and is in keeping with the view that exemplars of various levels of performance are useful to indicate the possibilities for performance (Gipps, 1994; Sadler, 2009a). Ros mediates both the assessment criteria and her understanding of quality through teacher exposition. However, Ros’s students do not routinely gain experience of a range of examples of quality through written exemplars. Instead, Ros maintains control over improvement in English. Neither teacher encourages or develops in students the means of engaging directly with the assessment criteria and standards for self-assessment and self-monitoring purposes. Both teachers reveal that the official assessment criteria and standards used for grading are not sufficiently transparent for students to engage with them.

There is no consistent view of the official assessment criteria and standards carried through from teachers to students in a unit of work, with both teachers offering alternative frameworks as part of classroom activities. In the one example of peer-assessment referenced to criteria reported by Ros, she provided a substitute criteria and standards sheet as part of a spoken presentation activity designed to rehearse persuasive speaking skills. This formative assessment activity did not engage students with the official criteria and standards by which their summative assessment pieces would
ultimately be graded. As outlined in Case report 2, Susan reported routinely generating alternative criteria and standards to engage students with exemplars of summative assessment tasks. The analysis of the example provided showed that the alternative criteria and standards did not feature one-to-one correlation with the official assessment criteria and standards used to grade summative assessment tasks.

Hay and Macdonald (2008) found that in Year 12 Health and Physical Education, teachers interpreted and mediated assessment criteria and standards for themselves, but in ways that made the original criteria and standards inaccessible to their students. The analyses of the case reports show that the language and emphases of the assessment criteria and standards are similarly interpreted by the English teachers in this study. Students have access to the official assessment criteria and standards documents that are distributed at the beginning of each unit of work, together with the task specifications sheet. Unless students independently work with the official assessment criteria and standards, their use as part of classroom activities is not encouraged. The case studies highlight the manner in which these teachers mediate and interpret assessment criteria and standards, using techniques including alternative criteria and standards to examine exemplars to develop an understanding of the features of performance, but with a more limited focus on the standards of performance in evidence across the cases.

**Co-production of student work.** In the Queensland system, the majority of the 7 to 8 summative assessment tasks required in Year 12 English can potentially be completed outside the classroom in fully unsupervised conditions. As indicated in Chapter 2, two assessment pieces must be completed under fully supervised examination conditions in classrooms. In producing the balance of summative assessment tasks produced in unsupervised conditions, students can access and incorporate feedback from a variety of sources at each stage of the text production process. This makes available opportunities for the co-production of student work as others, including the teacher, intervene in students’ texts in order to improve them. The strong emphasis on the feedback roles of others in student work is legitimated in the Syllabus.

As identified in the review of literature, the co-production of work is in keeping with constructivist theories of learning and reflected in the writing of Crooks (2001) and Stobart (2006), who categorised classroom assessment as work-in-progress and accepted that the final version is informed by the formative assessment. This is considered widely to be routine practice. Conversely, Sadler (1989) indicated that summative assessment
pieces for grading should be produced “by the student without aid from the teacher” (p. 142).

The case reports show that these teachers believe that Year 12 Senior English summative assessment tasks submitted for grading should be informed by the formative feedback they have provided on drafts. This contribution is shown to be predominantly editorial, focused on correcting and identifying “technical errors” at the level of syntax, semantics and punctuation. Both teachers also provide more general feedback comments, describing what is missing from the work and in what ways it could be improved. Tunstall and Gipps’ typology (1996) of teacher feedback to young children showed that feedback is either evaluative, implicitly or explicitly referenced to norms, or descriptive, with reference to achievement, competence or improvement. The general feedback comments of these teachers are evaluative, implicitly referencing desirable characteristics of the task, and descriptive, explicitly describing improvement moves. As identified, for teachers and students there is a dependence upon these types of advice in order for students to improve their submitted summative assessment pieces and the grade received on these pieces.

The organising principle of increasing independence, outlined above, promotes the intention for gradual hand-over of responsibility from teacher to student for improvement. The case reports indicate that this increasing independence may be reflected in the final assessment tasks in Year 12 where they are conducted under examination conditions, or to be performed as spoken/signed tasks that do not attract the full range of teacher feedback. However, in the context of the classroom, teachers understand that priority is given to the collection of summative assessment data for certification influencing students’ post school options and this influences the decisions they make about numbers of formative feedback opportunities and the development of students’ self-assessment skills. Further research would be needed to ascertain what constitutes an intervention in student work in the Queensland setting.

This discussion also opens up the gap to explore a new feedback/feedforward loop model, wherein teachers withdraw their feedback earlier in the drafting process, leaving the last review of the work to be performed by students through self-assessment, thereby contributing towards the Syllabus recommendations (QBSSSSS, 2002b) that students develop evaluative expertise in order to improve their own work and to gain editorial independence. This has implications for Authority requirements in relation to documentation of text production, which would need to reflect the requirement that
students conduct self-assessment before producing the assessable summative assessment item.

**Equity in formative assessment.** The case reports indicate that equity issues arise in respect of the provision of formative assessment. Susan provides formative assessment feedback opportunities differently for high-achieving, or ‘A’ level students. Similarly, Ros does not specifically use self-assessment or the assessment criteria and standards, or allow students to work with a wide range of models to develop evaluative expertise and self-evaluative skills. However, she understands that ‘A’ level students have developed these skills independently. The review of literature highlighted the concerns raised by some researchers (Carless, 2007; Cowie & Bell, 1999) that formative assessment may not provide the same opportunities for all students in a class, with the possibility that these interactions between the individual student and the teacher may not always occur. While this study did not observe classroom interactions, the teachers reported that formative assessment opportunities in different schools, and in respect of the skills that students could independently employ, such as self-assessment, were not provided in the same way for all students.

Both teachers do not regularly modify teaching and learning programs to suit the needs of individual students in their classrooms. Instead, priority is given for accounting for system requirements associated with certification and reporting. As outlined in Chapter 4, both teachers reported that they have relatively culturally homogenous classes. St. Catherine’s College reported 3 per cent of students were from a language background other than English, and 2 per cent identified as Indigenous; Plains SHS reported no students were from a language background other than English, and 3 per cent identified as Indigenous (ACARA, 2010). Both teachers reported that their Year 12 classes were made up of students of different levels of achievement from “high-achieving” to “low-achieving”, and some students with identified learning needs. The review of literature revealed the strong message that formative assessment is used to attend to individual students’ needs (ARG, 2002a; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen & James, 1997; Pollard, 1990). This is identified strongly as part of the pedagogy of subject English (Black & Wiliam, 2006; Marshall, 2007). Broadly speaking, the teachers in this study attend to individual students’ needs, not through modifying teaching and learning routines or formative and summative tasks, but through offering feedback to all students on their written drafts. Interactions with students drive the opportunities for feedback to
individuals, and priority is given to high-achieving students as described above, but with the teachers reporting that their actions are also influenced by what they perceive to be a system restriction on the modification of tasks and requirements. This is not in keeping with the strong position taken in ROSBA that standards-referenced, school-based assessment would enable “teachers and students to modify teaching/learning programs to suit the needs of students” (Scott et al., 1978, p. 36).

**Unrealised Affordances of the System**

The teachers’ accounts of their practices reveal a lack of understanding of some of the key underpinning ideas in the Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced system. Not all affordances of the system as originally conceptualised are realised in the practices of these two teachers. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is an expectation that Queensland Senior Schooling teachers will be engaged in assessment for formative purposes associated with the identification of and response to students’ learning needs in order that improvement can take place, and for summative purposes associated with certification and reporting student achievement on completion of a course of study. In addition, there is an expectation that the system opens up opportunities for student agency as students take an active role in their own learning and improvement. While both teachers are responsive to students’ learning needs in the provision of feedback, the idea that students take up an active role in their own learning is restricted by teachers’ lack of ease with the language of assessment as expressed in the assessment criteria and standards. It is also restricted by the teachers’ view that their feedback is central in the improvement process, and that they are primarily accountable for meeting summative assessment system requirements for certification and reporting at the exit from the course.

Chapter 1 outlined the official understanding that formative assessment practices and the roles of teachers and students would be influenced by the expectation of increasing independence. Overall, the opportunity to use the assessment criteria and standards as a framework for enabling student self-monitoring and self-evaluation is not taken up, with students instead dependent upon the teachers’ mediation and interpretation of this framework. The teachers endeavour to induct their students into notions of quality by promoting an understanding of standards, although this is a limited exploration in the work of one of the teachers. They also adopt approaches to the use of exemplars and mediated, translated assessment criteria and standards with their students. However,
neither teacher has an expectation of students’ independent self-assessment and self-improvement, nor promotes the use of standards in the development, or the expectation of the self-management of their learning in this way. Attempts to use peer-assessment to induct students into understandings about standards and develop evaluative expertise are partial. The potential for the system to support the increasing independence of students is undermined by the language used in official Exit Achievement Standards.

The system affords opportunities for assessment to be used for dual purposes, including the use of assessment as feedback for on-going improvement. Teachers work in a range of routinised ways, systematically providing multiple formative assessment feedback opportunities during units of work in preparation for summative assessment pieces. In Year 12, end of unit formal assessment items have come to be recognised in the system and schools as having a summative or reporting purpose in subject English. The teachers’ interpretation of their responsibilities for the security of summative assessment documents means that they do not use this opportunity to its full extent, rendering each summative assessment item as terminal. As already discussed, the opportunities for the carry forward of learning are therefore restricted.

The case reports describe tension arising between the teachers’ understanding of their role in the classroom and their reported need to meet official summative assessment requirements in this high-stakes certification environment focused on a number of pieces of assessment and grades for certification. They identify missed opportunities to practise formative assessment in a way that puts it central to learning itself, not just as evidence of measurement. The identification of improvement evidence as summative assessment grades shifts the focus from student improvement relative to student needs towards product improvement. While the teachers engage students in knowledge construction exercises, they focus this towards the preparation of summative assessment tasks and ultimately towards teacher feedback on summative assessment products.

The system provides opportunities for students to seek feedback from a range of sources. Draft texts are produced so that feedback can be sought. This feedback is to be used for self-improvement purposes, as students actively seek and reflect on feedback. However, both teachers and students restrict the possibility of the feedback of others in improving learning. The control over feedback is reflected in the students’ general dependence upon the teacher for feedback to improve their work. While the Syllabus (QBSSSSS, 2002b) promotes the idea of student self-assessment skills and the growing independence of the student from the teacher, there is not strong evidence of this.
occurring for the range of students in practice. In reflecting on their choices, teachers identify a perceived system emphasis on summative assessment, the breadth and number of assessment tasks required, their relationships with students characterised by the teacher as the mediator and interpreter of official criteria and standards, the emphasis on grades in the system, school, and in the classroom contexts, and the lack of time to attend to all of these expectations.

Chapter 7 has provided reflections upon the case reports, structured under the three headings of the case reports. The reflections have synthesised the key findings of the cases with the key messages of the literature. Chapter 8 presents three main insights into the topic of teachers’ formative assessment practices drawn from the reflections in Chapter 7. It also provides implications and recommendations arising from the study.
Chapter 8: Main Insights, Socio-cultural Framing, Implications and Recommendations

The final chapter of this thesis is organised into three sections. The first section presents three main insights into teachers’ formative assessment practices in the school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Queensland assessment system. These insights, drawn from the discussion in the preceding chapter, provide a means of responding to the main research question: What is the nature and function of teachers’ formative assessment practices in their Year 12 English classrooms?

The second section revisits the socio-cultural framing of the study, focusing on the thesis’s central notion of assessment as social interaction in contexts. The third section presents implications of the insights into teachers’ formative assessment practices for the workplace, as well as for further research. Recommendations are made for the use of digital folios in Queensland Senior English classrooms, and the use of an extra self-assessment feedback loop in the preparation of summative assessment items.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the warrant for this study was built upon intersecting factors. These include the understandings of formative assessment purposes, practices, and roles and interactions presented in the policy documents made available in the Queensland system, and identified in Chapter 2. They also include the agreements and contestations in understandings about formative assessment identified in the review of literature in Chapter 3, expressed in key messages from the literature. The examination of existing research into formative assessment in Queensland Senior Schooling revealed two other factors: that there is little empirical evidence of the Queensland system in practice; and that, consequently, there are few teacher accounts of their classroom assessment practices in this high-stakes, classroom-based assessment environment. This study provides empirical evidence of teacher practice in the form of previously unpublished insider accounts.

This is not an observational study. Therefore, it does not seek to present a comprehensive account of the formative assessment practices that the teachers employ on a day-to-day basis. However, the case reports provide teachers’ accounts of the nature and function of formative assessment within the formal system of assessment and more specifically within their classroom practice. It presents the first empirical evidence of the system in practice in Senior English classrooms.
Insights Gained from the Study

Three main insights about the nature and function of formative assessment practice in these teachers’ Year 12 English classrooms in the Queensland system emerged:

1. Both teachers talk of formative assessment as having an improvement purpose. Improved grades awarded to summative assessment pieces are regarded as evidence of improvement from formative assessment activities;

2. There is no hard or well-defined boundary between pedagogy and formative assessment practices; and

3. Teachers retain the central role in formative assessment.

These insights into teacher practice are based on the findings of the case reports, and the reflections on the cases provided in Chapter 7. The following discussion of the insights represents the contribution of the study to the literature. The insights are presented in italics for organisational purposes.

Improvement evidence. A main insight from the case studies is that teachers talk of formative assessment as having an improvement purpose. They both regard summative assessment grades as the evidence of improvement from formative assessment.

Chapter 1 describes Queensland’s school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment system as providing a unique set of circumstances for teachers’ assessment practices. What is unique is the responsibility that rests with the teacher for assessment for both formative and summative purposes. This study provides empirical evidence of this system in practice. It highlights how, in this context, assessment pieces designed to be used for summative purposes associated with grading and contribution towards certification dominate teaching and learning routines in classrooms. The preparation for, and of, stand-alone summative assessment items determines the close association between pedagogy and formative assessment, the use of assessment documents, and the roles of teachers and students.

This study highlights the common understanding in the literature that formative assessment and summative assessment are demarcated according to the purposes to which they are put. The study also shows that in the Queensland system they are ultimately used in the production of assessment items intended to be graded for summative assessment purposes. Formative assessment is strongly associated with rehearsal and improvement. Summative assessment is terminal at the point at which the work is judged, with little opportunity for carry-forward to future learning due to the secure storage of student folios.
The two assessment purposes are therefore viewed as strongly related, but in a one-way relationship with formative assessment subservient to summative assessment priorities. Despite the stated expectation that teachers will plan units of work including summative and formative tasks, teachers are not accountable for documenting formative assessment approaches, activities and pieces in units of work, but are accountable for meeting summative assessment requirements. The overlap between formative and summative assessment is realised in the way schools require students and teachers to complete authentication of text production procedures. Access to formative assessment feedback therefore becomes a documented part of summative assessment task production. In this setting, formative assessment becomes part of the external summative assessment and broader accountability system in that it is closely associated with improving assessment pieces to be graded for high-stakes purposes, with the focus firmly on students’ post school futures.

**Formative assessment and pedagogy.** The second main insight from the case studies is that for these teachers there is no hard or well-defined boundary between formative assessment and pedagogy.

The review of literature provides little evidence of the influence of high-stakes, wholly school-based, summative assessment on teachers’ classroom formative assessment practices. This study shows that in this environment, summative assessment exerts downward pressure on the nature and function of formative assessment in classroom contexts. Teachers are afforded freedom to customise their formative assessment practices. In practice, this freedom is framed by and focused towards specific summative assessment goals.

The insight that there is no hard boundary between formative assessment and pedagogy highlights the central place of feedback in teachers’ classroom assessment practices. Opportunities for feedback are embedded in all pedagogical routines. However, the nature of the feedback activity as it relates to who receives feedback and the function of that feedback are both relative to the proximity of the feedback activity to the production of summative assessment pieces. Teachers use pedagogical formative routines predominantly focused on providing verbal feedback as they work through the development of knowledge and skills in small and whole-class groups, and ultimately refocus their feedback towards the improvement of individuals’ summative assessment drafts. Improving drafts at this individual level is an important function of their formative
interactions with students, and clear preference is shown for the teacher’s written feedback at this stage. Despite an increasing focus in the research literature on the utility of technology, there is no strong connection between formative assessment and technology, including the use of technology for formative feedback.

Syllabuses include expectations for formative assessment, and formative assessment practice is therefore itself systematised within a summative assessment framework. This systematisation results in multiple sources of regulation of formative assessment generally. In particular this ultimately regulates student self-assessment in the learning environment, as discussed by Allal (2010), from both within and without the classroom. As noted, even though direct classroom observation was not undertaken in this study, other formative assessment practices for learning were reported by the two teachers. However, the system level focus is the major driver of classroom formative assessment practices for these two teachers.

**Teachers’ central role in formative assessment.** The final main insight from the case studies is that teachers occupy the central role in formative assessment as the primary source of evaluative feedback. This is maintained through students’ dependence on teachers’ feedback to improve their summative assessment pieces.

This study shows that there is a strong focus on the role of the teacher in two ways. First, there is a reliance on the role of the teacher as the provider of feedback to improve summative assessment items, and on classroom routines focused on the provision of teacher feedback in the preparation of summative assessment items. Despite the legitimate role of others in feedback in this system, one-on-one interactions between teacher and students are given priority.

Second, there is a reliance on teachers to have deep knowledge and control over the metalanguage of assessment, expressed here as the assessment criteria and standards. While the system sets up the circumstances and the expectation that students will develop knowledge and skills in relation to this metalanguage, ultimately the focus on achieving summative assessment readiness, and achievement measured in summative assessment grades means that teachers continue to control assessment and the language of assessment. Students do not fully engage in their own learning and remain dependent on the teacher for feedback to improve.

The system assigns teachers responsibility for the design and implementation of assessment tasks, as well as the judgement of students’ achievement in response to these
tasks. It also assigns them autonomy in their classrooms for implementing formative assessment, using the assessment criteria and standards as a tool to encourage student agency. System requirements impact on roles and relationships, creating tensions that result in teachers finding it difficult to move beyond roles associated with the giving and receiving of feedback as they focus on the production and improvement of summative assessment pieces. The implication is that the system expectation that criteria and standards will aid students “closing the gap” between their current performance and the one aspired to (Sadler, 1989) cannot be fully realised.

Assessment as Social Interaction in Contexts

A socio-cultural view of assessment (Broadfoot, 1996) emphasises interactions between groups of actors. The research field generally views effective formative assessment as social practice, that is, as involving social interaction in contexts (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2001, 2006; Cowie & Bell, 1999; Earl, 2003; Pryor & Crossouard, 2007; Torrance & Pryor, 1998). This study endorses formative assessment as socio-cultural practice informed by a range of interwoven, situated relationships from three interrelated contexts: system, school and classroom. The analysis reveals two types of relationships: those that have a regulatory, authoritative influence on teachers’ formative assessment practices and in which they do not occupy a position of power; and those through which teachers enact formative assessment, where they have power to control formative assessment for varied purposes. These relationships are with groups, individuals and their representative documents. Four main categories of documents influence teachers’ classroom formative assessment practices: system documents; school-produced documents; and teacher-generated planning documents and classroom formative assessment artefacts. This complex set of documents is given and received through a series of relationships that include the QSA, District and State Review Panels, English Department Heads, and finally, teachers and students.

Regulatory relationships are played out relative to teachers’ understanding of their role and their need to meet accountability requirements in high-stakes assessment. These relationships influence the ways in which the teachers provide formative feedback opportunities in their classrooms. In the cases reported here, these relationships are between individual teachers and authoritative others including Review Panels and the English Department Head.
As can be seen from this discussion and the case reports presented in this study, the autonomy afforded teachers to assess in their classrooms occurs at the interface of the three contexts and results in highly contextualised formative assessment practices. It is in the relationships between teacher and students in the classroom that teacher authority is strengthened. In the classroom context the teacher is able to customise their formative assessment practices. The teachers’ actions are responsive to both system and school requirements, as well as to their students and their view of the role of the teacher as formative assessment practitioner. They have a level of autonomy in that they are able to make decisions about particular routines and strategies and the formative assessment interactions they have with their students. Their enactment of formative assessment therefore takes place as part of a dynamic contextual mix. This study reveals that this dynamism is marked by the competing, interwoven nature of the teachers’ social contexts. The teachers’ formative assessment practices reflect their responsiveness to particular influences, as they prioritise particular understandings and processes, and interpret and adjust other requirements in line with personal views. However, it is clear that the system dominates.

This study shows that regulation plays an important part in formative assessment. Policy documents seek to regulate formative assessment practices. At the school level, assessment requirements are regulated through locally-produced expectations of curriculum and assessment. In the classroom, teachers regulate the learning, controlling the access and flow to their students of assessment criteria and standards, self-assessment, student folios, and feedback from others. Teachers control their enactment of formative assessment in the practice context, but this occurs within bounds. Their formative assessment practices are regulated by summative assessment demands that must be met. Their decisions about the nature and function of formative assessment are made in response to system and school constraints and expectations.

**Implications and Recommendations**

This study provides the first empirical investigation of formative assessment practices in Year 12 English in the Queensland system of school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced assessment that prioritises the role and purposes of formative assessment. Valued understandings of teacher and student roles, interactions and practices in the Queensland system have been revealed through these two teachers’ accounts of their lived formative assessment experiences. This study reveals how teachers
practise formative assessment in high-stakes assessment and how they engage with both formative assessment and summative assessment.

It reveals the difficulties inherent in engaging their students with standards and the interpretative and mediatory actions that they take in response to the use of standards in this system. Further, the study highlights teachers’ reported sense of disconnection from policy decisions, in a system where they report the weight of summative assessment and increasing social emphasis on marks, grading and reporting. As indicated earlier, the teachers’ accounts reveal that not all affordances of the system are realised in practice with key understandings about the expectations and potential use of standards in student self-assessment and self-monitoring not fully realised in either teacher’s classroom practices. Student agency in formative assessment is restricted by teachers’ reported lack of familiarity with the language of assessment and student dependence is maintained.

Several implications for workforce development and further research arise from the findings of the case studies, and the reflections presented in this chapter.

This study has taken place against a background of changing policy contexts. The English Senior Syllabus discussed in this study was written in 2002. Since then, as part of the process of Syllabus re-writing, trial/piloting and accreditation, another English Senior Syllabus (QSA, 2010c) has been released and implemented. Significant differences exist between these two documents relative to guidance about formative assessment. The 2002 English Senior Syllabus emphasised the purpose of formative assessment in improvement of achievement across the two year course. The 2010 English Senior Syllabus similarly states that “in continuous assessment, all assessment instruments have a formative purpose. The major purpose of formative assessment is to improve teaching and student learning and achievement” (p. 15). The 2010 English Senior Syllabus also clearly demarcates between Year 11 assessment items, and their formative rehearsal purpose, and summative assessment to be conducted in Year 12. However, definitions and detail about formative assessment techniques described in Chapter 2 have been reduced or removed in the later document. Given the finding of this study that students are reliant on teacher feedback for improvement, such reduced explanation and evidence of key guiding statements about formative assessment and its purposes may complicate further teachers’ use of formative assessment in their classrooms. However, it must be noted that within the systematised summative assessment role for formative assessment, stricter parameters are in place in the 2010 Syllabus for the provision of teacher feedback on rough drafts. This study provides insights that are important as teachers move forward in their use of
the 2010 Syllabus, and towards the Australian National Curriculum. This is discussed further in Conclusion.

Limitations of the study.

The limitations of the study are to be considered here as they impact upon the conclusions that can be made from this research. Such consideration also serves to point to areas for further research that can be undertaken, presented below.

As outlined in Chapter 1, this is a study of formative assessment practice in a particular educational system, in one state of Australia. The research was undertaken in a small number of school sites in regional Queensland and presents two case reports from two settings. There is, therefore, no intent to generalise beyond the cases which provide detailed insights into formative assessment practices in the classrooms of two teachers.

One of the features of the study is that it presents teachers’ accounts of their formative assessment practices. Focusing on teachers’ accounts in this way means that the data collection drew on the perspective of the teacher and not the student. Due to these research parameters, the voice of the student is not presented in the study. This focus on teacher accounts and artefacts meant that no classroom observation data was gathered that could indicate whether or not other practices existed outside of those described by the teachers.

Participants chosen for the study were both experienced, female teachers of English. While the method of selection was purposive, as outlined in Chapter 4, the study provided no insights into the practices of novice or beginning teachers, male teachers, or teachers of subjects other than English.

Despite yielding rich data about these teachers’ formative assessment practices, the case reports ultimately provided few insights into formative assessment practices related to student diversity, including linguistic diversity, in Senior English classrooms in Queensland. The study revealed no data on formative assessment practices relating to indigenous students or students with disabilities. Nor did it reveal any data on teachers’ use of ICTs consistent with current education priorities of digital or on-line communication.

Implications for further research.

This study has presented empirical evidence of how teachers provide formative assessment opportunities for students at the intersection of system, school and classroom
contexts. Further research topics are proposed here that address the limitations of the study, listed above, and are stimulated by the results. Conclusions about the influence of situational factors and the critical nature of relationships to teachers’ understanding and practice of formative assessment have been published (Dargusch, 2010). This study could be replicated with other teachers of English throughout Queensland, particularly in more urban areas, to see if similar findings emerge.

Further research could apply the findings about the influence of interrelated contexts described in the previous section to different assessment regimes focusing on the place of formative assessment in policy and practice. A comparative approach involving the examination of a range of practices in the delivery of assessment policy in other systems could be taken to determine whether this phenomenon is particular to this context. In the context of curriculum and assessment reform happening internationally, including the emphasis on high-stakes external, public examinations, it would be useful to examine the extent to which assessment system requirements determine what formative assessment practices are relied on in classrooms.

Consideration should also be given to other methodologies which would provide different forms of data and analysis. Further research into classroom formative assessment and the contribution of assessment criteria and standards could include classroom observations for greater insight into classroom practice. It could also draw on student voice in response to teachers’ reports of their classroom practices. This would enable a closer examination of the roles taken up by teachers and students in formative assessment interactions.

Further research is needed to provide insights into the formative assessment practices of beginning teachers, particularly in respect of the ways in which they operate at the intersection of multiple contexts without substantial teaching experience, their understanding and application of assessment criteria and standards for formative purposes and the influence of pre-service teacher training on their practices. Consideration should also be given to research involving a wider range of teacher participants in order to examine whether other factors, including gender, influence the formative assessment interactions between teachers and students.

Further research is also needed in other disciplines or Senior Schooling subject areas to indicate whether these findings apply in subjects with different frameworks for summative assessment and which do not, at the system level, indicate priority for students’ increasing independence and the role of self-assessment. Such research could be
used to determine if students’ dependence on teachers’ feedback, as identified in the current study, is a result of the nature of learning and assessment in subject English and would not hold true of other subject areas.

This study has brought to light the need to investigate three further research topics, stimulated by the research findings. The literature emphasised formative assessment meeting the needs of all students, with a focus on formative assessment feedback for individuals. The case studies provided some evidence that extended teacher feedback on summative assessment rough drafts is the common formative assessment approach for the improvement of students with diverse needs in these Senior Schooling classrooms, but neither case report provided data on a range of particular needs. An important research topic, therefore, concerns the way formative assessment functions in learning environments with students with diverse cultural, linguistic and learning needs in Queensland Senior Schooling. In particular, this should include a focus on indigenous students and students with disabilities.

The second further research topic concerns the study’s finding that these teachers give heavy emphasis to the production of summative assessment pieces and consequently report that they are largely unable to engage students in learning opportunities that are not solely or particularly associated with the production of summative assessment pieces. Further research could include a focus on this “other” learning, as well as on learning development in the Senior Phase of Learning. It would include a focus on what learning teachers envisage happening in Senior Schooling classrooms if the time commitment to assessment items for summative assessment or reporting purposes were reduced. An observational study could focus on any formative practices that are occurring in the classroom that have not been reported by these teachers and the extent to which formative assessment practices for learning outside of the production of summative assessment pieces is occurring in classrooms.

A third research topic that warrants attention is the top-down process of assessment policy delivery. At a school level, and based on these two cases, the English Department Head constructs all assessment tools. Where this occurs, teachers appear to be disconnected from the assessment documents which they are expected to use for formative purposes. Further research could determine whether this top-down process exists across all schools in this system and the extent to which it affects teachers’ formative assessment practices. An intervention study could examine what occurs when a top-down model is replaced with a more consistently collaborative approach based on
shared leadership. Distributed leadership literature would be relevant to such an investigation. Research would have to indicate whether the time requirements of this approach were realistic.

**Implications of the study for the workforce.** The manner in which teachers operate at the interface of interrelated system, school and classroom contexts in Queensland has implications for the workforce in this system and for teacher education. The Queensland system gives priority to the interpretation of system policy for the school and classroom contexts and this is one of its key recognised features. The extent to which the school and classroom contexts influence teachers’ enactment of formative assessment in the high-stakes environment of Senior Schooling has not been explicitly identified before. Confirmation now exists that in these teachers’ classrooms mandated system requirements for summative assessment in Year 12 outlined in the Syllabuses (2002b, 2010c) frame, but do not totally comprise the many influences on teachers’ practices. Other contexts operate within such systemic influence.

The case studies identified the teachers’ reluctance to use student self-assessment and the official assessment criteria and standards as formative tools. The result is that students are unable to fully develop evaluative expertise that leads to increasing independence, a process prioritised in both Syllabuses (2002b, 2010c). A key implication for teacher education is that consideration needs to be given to the importance of developing pre-service teachers’ formative assessment practices including specific development of formative assessment skills using assessment criteria and standards. Attention needs to be given to the place of dedicated assessment courses in undergraduate degrees in education at all universities in order that beginning teachers understand the system in practice.

A key implication for the system itself is that further education for serving teachers on broader understandings of formative assessment and its role in improving learning, and especially the role of self- and peer-assessment in formative assessment and improvement should also be considered. Key understandings of the underpinning principles of the system itself, such as teacher agency in quality assessment practice in Queensland, should also be considered as part of teacher professional development. The case reports have shown that professional knowledge of the underpinning principles of the system cannot be assumed. Such further education is also necessary for teachers joining the system from other jurisdictions who enter classrooms with little knowledge of the use of assessment criteria and standards in formative assessment.
Recommendations

As can be seen in this study, in the Queensland system, teachers reported that they practise formative assessment in a repeated pattern that is finite, contained within a unit of work and with a succession of terminal points on completion of each summative assessment piece. The teachers reported that this did not allow the closure of the feedback loop after the grading of individual summative assessment pieces at the ends of units of work. Further to this, there is a reliance on the co-production of student work related to deeply-held views by these teachers, and the reported views of students and parents about the continuing dependence of the student on the teacher to improve. Therefore, self-assessment is not a routine feature of teaching and learning. The implication is that formative assessment is restricted to that which takes place, in the main, between teachers and students.

Two recommendations arise from this study: the introduction of a classroom system of storing students’ summative assessment pieces digitally as well as in hard copy; and the introduction of an extra feedback loop that would occur after students have received feedback from the teacher and incorporated this into their work. The purpose of these two recommendations is to foster students’ active engagement in their own learning. This would occur through a focus on students compiling their own folios and reflecting on their profiles and thus their learning over time. It would also occur through a focus on self-assessment. The following section will discuss these two recommendations in light of their implications for teachers in Senior English classrooms in Queensland.

Digital folios. As identified in Chapter 3 there is a growing body of research that documents the possibilities that open up when formative assessment is delivered through digital media. What technology could also provide for students in the Queensland system is an effective and systematic way of making summative assessment pieces easily accessible to students, teachers and parents, for future formative purposes. While the system intends that assessment items are used for both summative and formative purposes, it has been shown that in these case studies dual purposes are not achieved for reasons associated with interpretation of system constraints. This proposal centres on the creation of a “digital learning history”.

The first recommendation of this thesis is that digitising student summative assessment folios could circumvent these problems, making available an explicit feedforward function to future learning and assessment. It is recommended that
summative assessment pieces, marked and with teacher feedback provided, be scanned to make digital copies. The original hard copies would be stored in folios awaiting Review Panel verification processes, as per current arrangements. The digital copies would then be at the disposal of the teacher and the students, to be used in formative activities to improve students’ subsequent work in a systematic and focused way. A summative assessment piece, for instance, could become part of a subsequent unit of work, where students look at the particular feedback given and work to develop skills that are missing or that need improvement. In this way the summative assessment pieces would not be “off-limits”, but embedded in future learning.

This move would increase the connections made between summative assessment performance and future learning. It would also provide opportunities for students to be self-reflective at a particular point in time and manage their own learning, becoming increasingly independent of the teacher. Students will have opportunities to investigate the gap between where their summative assessment piece sat in a previous unit, and where they wanted it to be, and use this information to improve future performances. The emphasis is quite clearly on student engagement in their own work and improvement. Subsequent summative assessment pieces could also be built onto the formative assessment items that have been produced in Year 11 for rehearsal purposes, as well as on previous assessment pieces in Year 12 in a more meaningful and explicit way for students. As indicated in the literature review, this would be most successful if students and teachers received training about best practice in student self-assessment.

The reported problems associated with feedback on spoken/signed summative assessment pieces focus on the lack of opportunities for students to access full formative feedback. While time constraints feature as a reason, this study opens up questions about how technology could be used to circumvent the limits placed on feedback for spoken/signed assessment tasks. In the same way that digital copies of written summative assessment pieces could afford greater opportunities for self-assessment, digital recordings of spoken performances would allow for greater self-reflection. Where spoken/signed performances are not recorded, the opportunity for any reflection is lost at the point of performance.

Another proposal would be the use of web-based ePortfolios, as explored by Finger and Jamieson-Proctor (2009). The usefulness of this type of tool would be the increasing opportunities for multiple interactions and feedback points. Formative interactions could be on-going between teacher, student and other students, and provide a
greater emphasis on development over time. It is anticipated that the use of such tools in English would provide platforms for interactions that are often difficult in a large-classroom setting, and for purposeful use of peer- and self-assessment.

**An extra feedback loop.** The case reports in this thesis provide a picture of students as remaining dependent upon teachers for feedback in order to improve. The routinised formative assessment practices reported in these cases do not feature the use of self-assessment practices in any systematic way, including the deliberate development of a range of self-assessment tools and activities in the classroom. Figure 16 illustrates the current practice of the teachers reported in the cases, showing that teacher feedback is a feature of the summative assessment production process. Two teacher feedback points routinely occur in relation to the production of summative assessment pieces: conferencing as part of early planning; and on summative assessment drafts. It is understood by the case study teachers that the feedback that is received on the draft, including direct interventions and corrections of errors, will be incorporated into the final draft.

The second recommendation of this thesis is that emphasis should be placed on the role of the student and the student’s own agency in their improvement in Year 12. Key practices would be the development of evaluative expertise, peer- and self-assessment and the use of the digital folio as a means of developing self-improvement skills across units of work. Figure 17 presents an alternative feedback model for Year 12, decreasing the dependence of the student upon the teacher. There are still two feedback points from the teacher. One is a verbal feedback point during conferencing of initial ideas for a summative assessment piece. The student then produces an early draft including the structure and partial script of the assessment item. This attracts the teacher’s written feedback, which the student engages with to write a full draft. Built into the process of preparing the final draft of the item, is an opportunity for collaborative reviewing attracting peer feedback. This would occur as part of classroom pedagogy. The student would then work with the assessment criteria and standards to self-assess. From here the final summative assessment piece would be produced for marking.

As can be seen in Figure 17, this process would serve to separate the final product from the teacher’s feedback, dismantling the co-production of the final product. There is potential for this feedback loop to involve some specific work with assessment criteria and standards, or particular self-assessment tools built on the criteria and standards as part
of tasks, or as part of the process. These types of activities would involve students building on the notions of quality that they have formed using the assessment criteria and standards to examine exemplars in class. This is in keeping with the clear message in the subject English-specific formative assessment literature that the assessment criteria and standards do not prespecify all relevant features of quality and instead signpost expected features of quality. It is envisaged that self-assessment tools in the digital folio would extend beyond the work of the current profile requiring the student to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the work and plot improvement goals. It is also understood that specific training would need to take place to induct students into the use of self-assessment tools.

Further research would be required on the impact of such a model on learning and teachers’ formative assessment and pedagogical practices. Problems associated with the issue of time could be predicted, but the strong ties between self-assessment and improvement made in the literature, and an equal emphasis given to the role of the student in their own improvement in the English Senior Syllabuses (2002b, 2010c) indicate it is important to begin to work with teachers on these practices.
Figure 16. Current summative assessment production process.

Summative unit development
Phase 1 - Initiating
1. Broad reference to summative assessment item from previous unit and broad links to new unit
2. Introduction to new unit and summative assessment requirements; receipt of task and task-specific, official assessment criteria and standards

Phase 2 – Content knowledge and skills development and improvement phase
1. Classroom discussions and formative activities focused on skills development and improvement
2. Some development of evaluative expertise through examination of exemplars against teacher-generated verbal or written standards

Phase 3 – Summative assessment product improvement phase
1. Student produces plan of summative assessment piece
2. Teacher provides verbal feedback
3. Student produces draft summative assessment piece
4. Teacher provides feedback
5. Student produces final product in response to teacher feedback

Phase 4 – Summative assessment marking and feedback
1. Summative assessment product submitted for grading
2. Item returned with grade and feedback recorded on official assessment criteria and standards; profile recorded; product filed
Figure 17. Summative assessment production process including extra feedback loop and use of digital folios in Year 12 English.
Conclusion

This study contributes new knowledge about formative assessment through its presentation of the accounts of Year 12 English teachers working in the Queensland school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced Senior Schooling system. This study provides evidence that teachers operate in interrelated contexts, attending to system requirements while demonstrating school site responsiveness. In their classrooms, they practise formative assessment in ways that are influenced by these requirements, but which are responsive to relationships with students and the teachers’ views of their role in the classroom as assessors and teachers.

The study provides information about teachers’ use of standards at a time when standards, teacher standards, and national standards continue to be high priority in education policy. The *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (1999) heralds increasing public confidence in school education “through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students’ levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated” (p. 1). The use of standards for improvement is on the national education agenda. For the first time a national curriculum, including achievement standards, is being adopted across the states and territories of Australia in response to both the Adelaide Declaration, and the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008). Key learning area subjects from Kindergarten to Year 10 (K-10) are being developed and implemented in Australian schools across the next few years. English K-10 is being implemented in Queensland schools in 2012 and English teachers are currently auditing, adjusting and re-writing existing and new programs to accommodate the Australian Curriculum. A range of senior secondary subjects including English will be released for public consultation late in 2012 (ACARA, 2011), with anticipated implementation in 2015 in Queensland.

According to Beavis (2010), the interpretation of policy documents and requirements to “remake the curriculum in ways that accord with their own histories, contexts and priorities” (pp. 21-22) has always been an important part of the work that English teachers do. The same observation could be made of the manner in which English teachers in Queensland interpret policy in relation to assessment, in ways that are responsive to their experiences, interrelated contexts and views of their role and the role of their students in school-based assessment.
What Queensland Senior English teachers bring to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum is their long history of experience with centralised standards. They also have considerable experience interpreting assessment policy relating to standards into classroom formative assessment practice. They are also experienced in the use of standards for moderation purposes which contribute to the “effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling” promoted by the Adelaide Declaration (1999, p. 1).

At the time of writing this thesis, the Australian Curriculum Year 12 English standards had not yet been produced. The existing Australian Curriculum achievement standards for English Foundation to Year 10 indicate the level of knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to achieve at the end of each year level. This model that will be adopted for the Senior Schooling Australian curriculum subjects is different from that of the Senior Syllabus Exit Achievement Standards in Queensland that provide a minimum benchmark standard to exit from a two year program of study and a possible range of standards of achievement at exit. Despite the differences Queensland Senior English teachers have a clear understanding of how standards apply in assessment. They are therefore well placed to implement and utilise the Australian Curriculum’s achievement standards. Consideration should be given to teachers’ practices in the use of assessment criteria and standards for formative assessment purposes reported in this study.

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum sits within a changing environment for assessment nationally and in Queensland, with growing priority given to accountability of teachers. During the last several years, Queensland teachers have responded to pressure exerted by the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy, particularly in relation to widely reported unfavourable results over consecutive years since its inception in 2008. More recently, the Queensland Government announced that its response to the Australian Curriculum included scripting units of work for state-wide implementation through its Curriculum into the Classroom program (C2C). This study highlights the resources Senior English teachers in Queensland will bring to such curriculum change, including their understanding of the dynamic interplay between system, school, and classroom contexts. The insider accounts presented here provide evidence that Queensland Senior English teachers respond to accountability requirements, but do so at the interface of these contexts. The OECD’s Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia (2011) calls for “a national reflection about the nature and purpose of evaluation components such as school evaluation, teacher appraisal and
student formative assessment within the overall education reform strategy” (p. 42). The case reports presented here provide information about formative assessment within the existing system and how this fits with the use of standards and teacher assessment.

In 1992 Campbell, McMeniman, and Baikaloff analysed vision statements provided by diverse participants to build a statement of values that could underpin educational curricula in the 21st century. The participants gave emphasis to supportive communities, and supportive interactions based on the needs of individuals within the community. High importance was given to the development of excellence within a context of social responsibility. This understanding of what is important in society can be juxtaposed with the era of growing accountability described above. In order to meet the “visions” described by Campbell et al., the role of the teacher and the relationship between teacher and student become even more critical. When measurement and testing, and mandated, received curriculum become features of the educational landscape, the role of the teacher in formative assessment to enable students to maximise their learning becomes pivotal.

The unique Queensland Senior Schooling, school-based, externally-moderated, standards-referenced system affords opportunities for teachers and students to improve student learning, based on the inclusion of criteria and standards summative assessment approaches in syllabuses with directions for formative assessment practice. This study has shown through the accounts of these two teachers that the affordances of this system have been achieved to an extent in practice. It has also shown that competing tensions are brought to bear on the day-to-day work of teachers in classrooms as they attend to system accountability requirements. The findings of this study should enable further understanding of the role of the teacher as formative assessment practitioner, and the role of the student as assessor, with the goal of achieving greater outcomes for student learning.
### 6.7.3 Mid-range standards associated with exit criteria

Table 2: Very High Achievement

At Very High Achievement, the student has consistently shown a discriminating knowledge and understanding of how texts are constructed across a range of texts in a range of social and cultural contexts. The student has demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge, understanding and control of the interrelatedness of purpose, genre, register, textual features and discourse in texts. The student has demonstrated a thorough understanding of the implications of texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and control of texts in their contexts</th>
<th>Knowledge and control of textual features</th>
<th>Knowledge and application of the constructedness of texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student has demonstrated knowledge that meanings in texts are shaped by purpose, cultural context and social situation by:</td>
<td>The student has demonstrated knowledge of appropriateness of textual features for purpose, genre, and register by:</td>
<td>The student has demonstrated knowledge of the ways in which texts are selectively constructed and read by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exploiting the patterns and conventions of genres to achieve cultural purposes</td>
<td>• exploiting the sequencing and organisation of subject matter in stages</td>
<td>• thoroughly examining how, and exploiting the ways discourse in texts shape and are shaped by language choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• selecting and synthesising substantial, relevant subject matter</td>
<td>• making discerning use of cohesive ties (and hyperlinks) to emphasise ideas and connect parts of texts</td>
<td>• evaluating how, and exploiting the ways cultural assumptions, values, beliefs and attitudes underpin texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• interpreting, inferring from, analysing and evaluating information, ideas, argument and images in great depth</td>
<td>• exploiting an extensive range of apt vocabulary, including figurative uses</td>
<td>• making subtle and complex distinctions when evaluating and when shaping representations of concepts and of the relationships and identities of individuals, groups, times and places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• substantiating opinions with well balanced and relevant argument and evidence</td>
<td>• combining a wide range of clause and sentence structures for specific effects, while sustaining grammatical accuracy</td>
<td>• thoroughly analysing how readers are invited to take up positions in relation to texts and demonstrating with subtlety and complexity the position(s) s/he adopts as a reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exploiting the ways writers, speakers/signers, shapers' roles and their relationships with readers, listeners, viewers are affected by power, distance and affect</td>
<td>• sustaining control of paragraphing and a wide range of punctuation</td>
<td>• making purposeful and discerning choices that very effectively invite readers to take up positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exploiting modes and media, integrating them to effect if appropriate.</td>
<td>• controlling conventional spelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Interview Protocol

**Preamble to Phase 1 interviews—read before each Phase 1 interview.**

My name is Jo Dargusch, I’m a doctoral student at Griffith University, and I’m interested in formative assessment in Senior Schooling in English in Queensland. I have been a teacher of Senior English in state secondary schools in Queensland since 1991, and this interview will form part of the studies that I’m undertaking at the moment around formative assessment in Senior English.

I have a number of questions to ask you about your understandings about formative assessment in Senior English, and your practices in the classroom. I would just like to make the point that there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions I’ll ask today – the interview is simply about finding out what experienced teachers do with formative assessment in the Senior English classroom.

Thank you for bringing the artefacts we discussed when I spoke to you on the phone. It would be helpful if you could draw on these samples as we talk. I will also need your permission to take copies of these artefacts.

This is a semi-structured interview, so I have some broad questions I will be asking about your understandings and practise of formative assessment in Senior English, and I anticipate other related questions will arise from your answers. What I would like you to do is talk openly about the formative assessment practices that occur in your classroom. At the end of these questions, I will ask you to look at some quotes from the 2002 English Senior Syllabus and comment on them in relation to your practice.

I will take some notes while we talk, but, with your permission, will also be audio-recording our conversation so that I can transcribe the interview in full for later analysis. After the transcribing is done I will erase the tapes. Your name and the name of the school will be removed from the transcripts, and pseudonyms assigned so that you are not directly identifiable in my thesis. Your input into this research will be confidential.

**Interview – three sections**

**First section: background**

1. How long have you been teaching Senior English? And in Queensland?
2. How many schools have you taught in?
3. How long have you been teaching Senior English at this school?
4. What role do you play in the writing or revising of the SWP and identifying assessment activities?
5. What are the relationships between the members of the Senior English department of your school that determine how assessment decisions are made?
6. What materials do you use to inform your assessment practice?

**Second section: understandings about assessment and classroom practices**

1. What is the role of assessment in Senior English (Years 11 and 12, then specifically in Year 12)?
2. What is your understanding of the function of summative assessment in Senior English, and Year 12 English in particular? What is the process of getting students to produce a summative piece of assessment?
3. How have you developed this understanding? What or who has informed it?
4. Does this change over time?
5. What is your understanding of the function of formative assessment in Senior English, and Year 12 English in particular?
6. How have you developed this understanding? What or who has informed it?
7. What are the formative assessment practices you use in your Year 12 English classroom?
8. How do you use feedback in your Year 12 English classroom?
9. What use do you make of criteria and standards schemas in your Year 12 English classroom? Are they used for formative purposes? Describe what you do with them. Describe what students do with them?
10. How do you make decisions about what formative assessment practices you will use in your Year 12 classroom and with whom? What or who influences these decisions?

**Third section: quotes from the English Senior Syllabus (QBSSSS, 2002b)**

*Teachers were asked to read each of the following quotes and comment about their practice relative to these.*

1. Assessment is an integral aspect of the course of study (in Senior English). The distinction between formative and summative assessment lies in the purposes for which that assessment is used.
2. Formative assessment …is used to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers about achievement over the course of study. This enables students and teachers to identify the students’ strengths and weaknesses so students may improve their achievement and better manage their own learning.

3. Timely and constructive feedback from teachers and peers helps student to develop their use of language and encourages them to refine their efforts. …however, it is vital for the classroom teacher to assist students in developing editorial independence, using the criteria and standards to develop students’ self-evaluative expertise.

4. Task sheets, including criteria and standards schemas are used to inform learning/teaching practice, provide students with the opportunity to develop self-evaluative expertise.

5. Increasing independence develops as students accept increasing responsibility for their own learning.
Appendix C

The Syllabus Checklist

This is a checklist of formative assessment issues compiled from the Syllabus document. If this checklist indicates that further clarification of the key issues is needed, or more evidentiary support would be beneficial for a particular participant, then the researcher will arrange a second interview.

Topics covered in teacher talk:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Examples of classroom practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of formative assessment in Year 12 English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formative assessment practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative and summative assessment - relationship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Modes of formative assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sites of formative assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of feedback for formative purposes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Task-specific criteria and standards for formative purposes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student use of criteria and standards schemas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer- and self-assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ self-evaluative expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students accept increasing responsibility for their own learning over the course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and relationships of teacher and students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and relationships of teacher and other staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s use of policy documents (Syllabus, SWP)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Questions for phase two interview – Case study 2

- How does formative assessment occur around homework tasks, or home essays? Written feedback only, delivered to individuals? Opportunities for verbal discussion of that? Where?
- Where you use homework tasks/essays to determine what students’ understanding of a particular concept or skill is, what would then occur in class when you hand this back? What sort of comments would be made – written, verbal? Would the feedback on this determine what happens next in class, or does this take place in a relationship just between you and the students as individuals?
- What are the interactions that occur in class around formative assessment? What are the roles of teachers and students? Eg. “We talk about that”…what form does the talk take – whole class/individuals/what happens if individuals don’t understand?’
- Do students ever work independently on matching standards to an exemplar, or is all of this work done by you in combination with them in class?
- What formative assessment opportunities do you make available to students who have learning difficulties?
- Do students get the unit overview from the SWP (show example)?
- Describe the interactions that occur between you and the students, and between the students and each other in a unit of work.
- What is the skill building and knowledge building she feels is lacking now? Does she mean structure outside the preparation for SA? Refer her back to interview one; 80-82.
- Is the formative assessment she has identified as missing from the system focused on general skills (English skills) – what are the other skills? (The skill-building and knowledge-building tasks which I would regard as being formative practices – interview one; 80)
- Why is there such a deficit of time now? (says “we used to have better discussions & get our teeth into things a lot better” – interview one; 62) When does she believe things changed?
- Do formative tasks occur in the classroom (she mentions homework tasks/reading tasks)? Do they attract individual feedback if they occur in the classroom? Are there ever any group tasks in the classroom that attract feedback to the group from the teacher? From other students?
- What use is made of observations in the classroom? What effect does this have on teaching and learning?
- Any sites for giving formative feedback other than in the classroom?
Appendix E

Expression of Consent Form

Expression of Consent

Teacher use of formative assessment in Year 12 Senior English in Queensland schools Teachers

Who is conducting the research?  
Chief Investigator: Professor Claire Wyatt-Smith  
School of Education and Professional Studies

Contact Phone: 07 373 55647  
Student Researcher: Jo Dargusch  
School of Education and Professional Studies

Contact Phone: 0421 867571  
Contact Email: darguschaig@bigpond.com

Consent to what?

As a participant in this project you are consenting to take part in an initial semi-structured interview to which you will bring evidence of practice in the form of artefacts. You are giving permission for the researcher to take copies of the artefacts that you bring to the interview. You are also consenting to a second phase interview should that be deemed necessary by the researcher. You are consenting to the interview/s being recorded on audio-tape, then transcribed and analysed by the researcher.

Collection of this form

The researcher has sent this form electronically, as previously agreed, and will telephone you early next week to ensure that you have provided your consent, and to answer any questions you may have. When the researcher meets with you to conduct the interview, she will collect this (signed) consent form.

Statement of consent

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include the completion of a semi-structured interview;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
I agree to participate in the project.

Signed ___________________________________________
Dated ____________________________________________
Appendix F

Transcription Codes

Transcriptions of interviews: The words of the interviewees were transcribed verbatim.

T stands for Teacher
R stands for Researcher

The following textual markers were included in the transcription of the interviews:

- Parentheses were used to indicate words that could not be clearly understood from the recordings;
- Numbers were used to indicate pauses in the talk;
- The interviewees’ physical actions were described where they were a necessary part of the interview process. Eg. [indicates task sheet].
Appendix G

Sample Summative Assessment Task Specifications—Case report 1

ASSESSMENT 2: PUBLIC TEXT – FEATURE ARTICLE

12 English
Semester 1
Unit: Fooling the People
Length: 800-1000 words
Progress Sheet Due: Thursday 12\textsuperscript{th} March (Week 7)
Draft Due: Monday 16\textsuperscript{th} March (Week 8)
Date Due: Tuesday 31\textsuperscript{st} March (Week 10)

Name ____________________________  Teacher: ______________________

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

TEACHER’S COMMENTS

Strengths: _______________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
What you can do to improve: _________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHENTICATION</th>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th>Stages of Text Production</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cite material resources you accessed in your bibliography and in text references.</td>
<td>Tick relevant boxes</td>
<td>Ideas &amp; Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Checklist:</strong></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>□ Text attached or from list</td>
<td>Other students your age</td>
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BACKGROUND TO THIS TASK
We have been studying a variety of expository, persuasive and film texts that attempt to persuade or direct action. In the process, we have considered:

- The discourse or discourses that operate in the texts
- How cultural assumptions, values, beliefs and/or attitudes underpin the texts
- How concepts, and the relationships and identities of individuals, groups, times and/or places, are represented in the texts, and
- The way each text has been constructed to guide the audience to accept the author’s representation of the subject or to lead the audience to behave in particular ways.

TASK
- Imagine that a major weekend newspaper is inviting guest feature articles from students in their final year of school to provide a youth perspective on matters of public concern.

You believe that the public texts to which we are exposed are often one-sided or misleading and predispose us to particular ways of interpreting contemporary life. This is inevitable, of course, as any text is only a representation of a more complex reality. However, you believe many readers don’t fully appreciate this and, as a result, are too trusting of what they read and view.

So, to demonstrate your point, you have decided, in your guest feature article, to analyse one public text critically, to show your readers how the text represents a particular issue, individual, group of people, or event in a one-sided or incomplete way.

There are many public texts available, such as documentaries, feature films, websites, current affairs programs, and radio, newspaper, magazines and advertising texts. For the purposes of this assignment, you will need to choose one of the print or media texts supplied or negotiate a choice of your own with the teacher by Monday 12th March. If you choose the second option, submit a copy of the text with your assignment.

- Give your article a title that would catch a reader’s attention.

PROGRESS SHEET
- Name the issue, individual, group or event that you are writing about in your feature article: ____________________________________________

- Name the text you are analysing: ____________________________________________
CONTEXT OF TASK

Genre: A feature article for a major weekend newspaper
Subject Matter: Representations of an issue, individual, group or event in one public text
Mode: Written
Medium: Newspaper
Purpose: To provoke, inform, and to critically analyse the representations of an issue, individual, group or event in one public text
Audience: Readers of the newspaper, mostly adult

CONDITIONS
1. Choose your text from the supplied list or negotiate a choice of your own by Thursday 12th March.
2. Some class time will be provided in Term 1 for reading or viewing the texts, negotiating your choice and conferring with teachers. However, there will be no class time available to work on the assignment during Term 2.
3. Negotiate your choice with your teacher and submit the Progress Sheet by Tuesday 13th March.
4. Submit with your assignment:
   ✓ the task sheet with the Authentication and Progress sections filled in
   ✓ research notes
   ✓ a plan of your article
   ✓ a draft of your article
   ✓ a bibliography, if you consulted sources other than the text you are analysing
   ✓ a print copy of your work.

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Texts in Contexts
- Use layout and language typical of a feature article. Read and study examples from weekend newspapers to discern the usual conventions.
- Early in your article, explain what you believe to be the subject matter of the text you are analysing and the point(s) of view expressed in it.
- Establish your credentials as author of the article with some indication of how your experience or qualifications allow you to write with authority on the subject.
- A feature article such as this will contain serious analysis, but needs to work harder to catch and keep the attention of an audience than, say, a scholarly essay. So make the article as readable and entertaining as you can without compromising your analysis too much.
- Remember that you are writing in the role of a young person casting a critical eye over representations of a particular issue, group, individual or event to a mostly older reading audience.

Textual Features
- Give your article a title.
- You do not need to provide text referencing in the article. However, provide a bibliography if you consulted sources other than the text you are analysing.
- Use images, illustrations and other graphic design elements, as appropriate, in your article. These should enhance and complement the meaning of your article.

Knowledge and Application of the Constructedness of Texts
- When analysing the texts, use the headings below. Typical questions you can ask are included.
  1. The discourse or discourses in the text
     - How would you describe the style or styles of language used in the text? Who typically uses this style of language?
     - Is this style (or styles) of language identified with particular groups of people or particular ways of interpreting the world or our lives?
     - How do the values that the text expresses influence the style of language used?
2. **The cultural assumptions, values and beliefs that underpin the text**
   - What assumptions about what is really important does the text express? Do you associate these assumptions with a particular group of people?
   - How do these assumptions influence the point(s) of view expressed?
   - Which values seem to be approved of in the text? Which values does the text seem to disapprove of, either explicitly or implicitly?
   - Which values are in the foreground? Which are more in the background, or left out?
   - Do you agree with the cultural assumptions, beliefs and values the text is foregrounding?

3. **How concepts, relationships and identities are represented in the text**
   - Which ideas does the text approve of? Which ideas is it critical of, either explicitly or implicitly?
   - Which kinds of relationships seem to be approved of in the text? Which relationships is it critical of, either explicitly or implicitly?
   - Which ways of representing individuals or groups does the text foreground?

4. **How the audience is positioned to believe or act**
   - What information is included and/or excluded to position you to believe or act in particular ways?
   - How are certain groups or individuals represented to lead you to particular interpretations?
   - How is the text structured to lead you to believe or act in particular ways?
   - Does the text use emotional techniques (e.g., appealing to your needs, wants and desires, or your fears and anxieties) to position you?
   - Does the text build on particular assumptions to influence you by arguments deriving from these assumptions?
   - Does the text explicitly value or criticise particular concepts, ways of behaving or particular individuals or groups? If so, how?
   - Do you accept the way the text positions you to understand points of view, values, or ways of interpreting life? Can you suggest an alternative or resistant reading or viewing?
## Senior English Course Overview

### Semester Three/Four - Year 12

#### Affective Objectives

- Experiencing and expressing emotional reactions; exploring possibilities, and creating desired effects; participating effectively in activities that involve connecting with people, feelings, places, objects.

#### Knowledge and Control Of Texts In Their Context

**Students should develop explicit knowledge about the ways:**

- language in closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles and is shaped by discourses in cultural contexts and social situations.
- readers of closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles adopt particular reading positions and practices.
- cultural assumptions, values, beliefs and attitudes underpin closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles.
- the relationships and identities of individuals, groups, times and places are represented in closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles.
- choices from systems of textual features are made in production of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles according to underlying discourses, genre and register.

#### Knowledge and Control Of Textual Features

- demonstrate that meanings in the closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles are shaped by purpose, genre and register choices.
- use textual features in the closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles according to genre, register and discourses.
- use and control in the closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles in context, taking account of purpose, genre and register.
- combine in various ways genre, register and discourse.

#### Knowledge and Application of the Constructedness of Texts

- conceptualising how discourse, genre, register and textual features work together in closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles.
- making decisions about the effectiveness of particular language choices among these relationships to clarify and negotiate meaning making in the closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles.
- evaluating and modifying language choices to gauge their appropriateness in the closing arguments of a legal defence or prosecution in a courtroom and feature articles.

### Resources

- Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth.

### Assessment Possibilities and Conditions

1. **ORAL** - Public Text: Defence or Prosecution

   Students choose either to be the prosecution or the defence counsel in the trial of Macbeth for crimes against humanity and deliver their closing speech to the jury.

   **Conditions**
   - Notice of Task: 4 weeks
   - Exposure to Context/Genre: New genre and context
   - Time Allowed: Four weeks. At least four lessons for drafting and consultation. Completed at home.
   - Access to Resources: Group discussions, free access to composition and editing tools.
   - Length: 4–6 minutes.

2. **WRITTEN** - Public Text: Feature Article

   Students write an article about the outcome of the trial of Macbeth in relation to crimes he committed against humanity, and consider whether such behaviour is intrinsic to the nature of human.

   **Conditions**
   - Notice of Task: 4 weeks
   - Exposure to Context/Genre: New genre and context
   - Access to Resources: Group discussions, free access to composition and editing tools. No more than two rough drafts for teacher feedback.
   - Length: 600–600 words.
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