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copy

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Mrs Pauline White
Chair
School Curriculum and Standards Authority
PO Box 816
CANNINGTON WA 6987

Dear Mrs White

Attached is a copy of an article from today's West Australian newspaper **YEAR 12 EXAM IN SPELLING FAIL**.

We ask you, please, to refer to the section of the article which reads *"The West understands the comical but potentially confusing option B – "it will be more difficult for crustations (sic) to construct their shells" – was the correct answer."*

CNI has a keen interest in Australia's education system and achievement standards. Are the State Curriculum and the National Curriculum the same and if not, to what extent do they differ?

Also, for what purpose is ATAR used?

It would help us to better understand the curriculum and ATAR system if, ignoring the spelling error, you could confirm what was the correct answer to this multiple-choice question - Option B or another?

Many thanks

Sincerely,

Denis Whitely

Denis J Whitely
Executive Committee - CNI

YEAR 12 EXAM IN SPELLING FAIL

EXCLUSIVE BETHANY HATT

Maybe these examiners should have sat a spelling test.

Thousands of WA Year 12s sitting their final chemistry paper this week were confronted with a bizarre spelling mistake that slipped past many checks by examiners.

A question in the multiple-choice section of the ATAR chemistry exam held on Monday referred to "crustations" rather than crustaceans.

Students were asked to select from four choices — all focused on oceans or marine organisms — about which scenario was likely to occur due to an increase in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere.

The West understands the comical but potentially confusing option B — "it will be more difficult for crustations (sic) to construct their shells" — was the correct answer.

A spokesperson for WA's School Curriculum and Standards Authority, which sets the ATAR exams, said the use of the word "crustation" was "typographic error" that had crept in despite its "rigorous examination

development process. Examiners were yet to decide whether to adjust their marking to take the mistake into account.

For each ATAR course examination, the chief examiner and chief marker convene a ratification meeting to review a sample of students' papers and confirm the marking key and, when necessary, adjust the marking key to ensure that no student is disadvantaged," the spokesperson said.

"The marking process is in progress and the details of answers for ATAR course examinations are released once all processes are complete in the new year."

Science Teachers Association of WA president Geoff Quinton said the error was "unfortunate" given the number of checks exam papers went through.

"It is surprising, knowing the rigour that SCSA apply to the exam process," he said.

More than 4000 students were enrolled in Year 12 chemistry this year.

Students from schools across WA began sitting their ATAR course written exams on October 30, with the last exam scheduled for November 17.

News of the spelling blunder comes as Victoria announced a review of checking and proofing processes for Year 12 mathematics exams after multiple errors appeared in papers this year and last year.

After the latest error was picked up — an incorrectly labelled diagram in the final question of a specialist maths exam held on Monday — it decided to award all students who attempted the exam a correct score for that question.