

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release Friday 8 August 2008

Students must meet minimum standards to complete schooling, says ACER CEO

After 13 years of schooling all students must have fundamental skills and understandings essential to successful functioning as an adult member of Australian society and the workforce according to Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) chief executive Professor Geoff Masters.

Masters will tell delegates to ACER's Research Conference 2008 in Brisbane on Monday that the skills and knowledge students need for life beyond school go well beyond proficiency in the traditional '3 Rs'.

Masters argues that in addition to developing basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy, every student completing 13 years of school should be expected to meet at least minimal standards of scientific literacy, ICT literacy, and civics and citizenship knowledge. He observes that employer groups also are calling for greater attention to the development of employability skills such as planning and organising, teamwork, initiative and enterprise, self-management and skills for learning.

"A fundamental purpose of schooling is to provide every student with knowledge and skills to equip them for life beyond school," Professor Masters says. "But most students can complete 13 years of school and be awarded a senior certificate without having to demonstrate at least minimally acceptable levels of proficiency across a range of essential skills and understandings."

Masters will argue for the establishment of minimally acceptable achievement standards in a set of skill domains that all students would be expected to reach after 13 years of school. Under the plan, a range of stakeholders would set benchmarks for what they considered to be minimally acceptable levels of knowledge and skill in particular domains.

"Minimally acceptable standards would not be tied to any particular year of school, but would be standards that every student would be expected to reach at some point in their schooling, and all students should reach by the time they leave school," Professor Masters says.

The ACER Research Conference 2008, *Touching the Future: Building skills for life and work*, takes place in Brisbane from 10 to 12 August.

*****ENDS*****

Media enquiries:

Louise Reynolds

Corporate Publicity and Communications Manager

Australian Council for Educational Research

Phone: (03) 9277 5582

Mobile: 0419 340 058