QASMT PHILOSOPHY:
Our philosophy is sourced from both International Baccalaureate Organisations underpinnings, and from Education Queensland frameworks.

We believe that it is our charter to:

“develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people...to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners.”

(The Diploma Programme: From principles into practice p.3)

We also believe that the ten qualities espoused in the IB Learner Profile, and the “holistic” approach of the IB Diploma is an appropriate structure for gifted students in which to learn and grow.

We seek to implement to Education Queensland vision of “optimising every student’s opportunity to achieve their potential” and that gifted students should “feel valued in a learning environment which both challenges and supports them to pursue excellence and develop a passion for lifelong learning.” (Framework for Gifted Education: EQ).

How does QASMT seek to implement this vision/philosophy?
- By providing an environment in which gifted students can excel or are capable of excelling
- By identifying giftedness through the selection process for attendance at QASMT
- By affirming the giftedness of many of our students
- By encouraging these students to view themselves with confidence and self-efficacy
- By providing appropriately rich intellectual and experiential support, based upon the implementation of, but not in any way limited to, the IB Diploma Programme
- By encouraging an environment of “like-mindedness”, where peer support and belief is one of our cornerstones

How does QASMT adhere to these principles?
- EQUITY: by giving gifted students the right to access appropriate educational Programmes
- DIFFERENCE: by recognising that gifted students are different from their peers and that gifted students’ needs are individual, not always “common”
- EXCELLENCE: by giving gifted students the right to enjoy learning outcomes which are consistent with their abilities
- PARTNERSHIPS: by ensuring that the development of our gifted students is a jointly shared responsibility of home and Academy
- PRACTICES: by ongoing research and evaluation and improvement

Acceleration
QASMT adheres to Education Queensland guidelines for acceleration of gifted students. The three guiding principles of acceleration are all considered in relation to the needs of our students. These principles are:
- Curriculum compaction
- Subject acceleration
- Grade enhancement

How does QASMT seek to develop its Gifted and Talented Policy and put it into practice?
- IDENTIFICATION of students is done through one or more of the following – self-identification; parent identification, school or guidance identification, the entry test to QA (ACER developed HAST test)
- COLLABORATION/PARTNERSHIPS – through the environment provided at the Queensland Academies
- LEADERSHIP—Gifted and Talented policies are at QA level, within Academies and across subject areas
- TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL – professional development of teachers should be ongoing, and the level of differentiated support provided by them to students is evidence of implementation of such practice
- STUDENTS – become more aware of their abilities and learning styles, and actively seek to become independent learners

**Recognition of Social and Emotional Differences in Gifted Children:**
At QASMT, we recognise the social and emotional differences which are often evident in gifted children. These differences may include:

- Emotional intensity
- High levels of empathy
- Acute sense of social justice and fairness
- Reading "above" age
- Companionships among older students or adults
- Close association with a few rather than casual association with many
- Mature sense of humour
- Some evidence of forced-choice dilemma
- Evidence of “over-excitability” (intellectual, emotional, imaginative, sensual and psychomotor)

To support these social and emotional differences, SMT:

- Provides mentoring through our INSTEP programme
- Accelerates students, where appropriate
- Provides for ability grouping, where appropriate
- Encourages perseverance in students
- Provides support for time management

**Underachievement and Giftedness:**
At QASMT, we recognise that underachievement exists. Underachievement is the discrepancy between potential and performance. Specific examples include:

- Learning difficulties
- Low self-efficacy towards academic learning
- Dysfunctional perfectionism
- Forced-choice dilemma (where a student’s desire to excel is moderated by the need to be accepted by peers)
- Boredom
- Being dominant visual-spatial (VS) learners in an auditory-sequential (AS) classroom
- Cognitive inefficiency caused by extended disengagement

At QASMT, we recognise that these elements of underachievement can lead to low teacher expectations. It is expected that teachers will:
Identify or be made aware of learning difficulties (we have a number of ‘twice-exceptional’ students) and to adjust learning environments to cater for their needs

Use the mentoring process to identify and assist students with low self-efficacy, or with dysfunctional perfectionism

Maintain the Academy ethos of celebrating giftedness in all sorts of ways, to encourage an ethos in students that it is valid to be academically exceptional

Provide stimulating classroom environments which avoid student boredom

Use ICTs and other teaching approaches appropriately in ways which assist VS learners in A-S classrooms

Identify disengagement and collaboratively work through ways to re-engage such students

ALWAYS MAINTAIN HIGH TEACHER EXPECTATIONS!

Differentiation at QASMT
Teachers at SMT recognise that Gifted students fall into one of SIX types. They are:
1. Successful
2. Challenging
3. Underground
4. Dropouts
5. Twice exceptional
6. Autonomous learners

At QASMT, we seek to identify the “types” of gifted learner, in order NOT to ‘brand’ them, and, in an ideal situation, seek to transform all gifted students into autonomous learners.

In order to successfully differentiate at QASMT, teachers are to consider in their classroom planning:
1. **Content:** Is the level suitable? Are outcomes pre-tested? Do changes need to be made prior to or after delivery?
2. **Processes:** Is the pace of instruction appropriate? Are skills pre-tested? Do changes need to be made to higher order thinking skills?
3. **Products:** Are the problems/audiences/deadlines “real world”? Are outcomes extended or accelerated?
4. **Learning Environment:** Are ability groups considered/used? Are changes made during or after units?

Teachers are also expected to consider the following issues in regards to differentiation in the classroom:
- Pre-testing
- Compacting curriculum
- Developing tiered instruction
- Where relevant, negotiating contracts
- Designing independent study or research projects
- Utilising paired or small group work
- Initiating, where possible, negotiated curriculum
FUTURE GOALS FOR QASMT IN GIFTED EDUCATION (2010 – 2013)

- Stronger focus on professional development of teachers, including early completion of Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Modules for Teachers (GERRIC/UNSW/Australian Government), prior to commencement, where possible.

- Regular focus on Gifted Education classroom practices which are effective at SMT, and celebrating excellent practice (including extension activities beyond ‘normal’ classroom practices

- Stronger focus on differentiation – not all gifted students are equally gifted, nor in the same areas. This focus to extend to classroom practices generally, extending into review of how our practices and the IB Diploma Programme can “mesh” for gifted students

- Stronger support mechanisms for underachievement and better recognition by teachers that we should have a zero tolerance policy on students leaving because of underachievement, where possible – a re-strengthening and enhancement of the mentoring processes at SMT. Good mentoring is, according to current literature in gifted education, one of the most vital elements in support of gifted students in achieving to their potential.

- A culture which persistently expects the highest possible standards from all students – an understanding that, as each year progresses, we get more and more students who are legitimately identified with “potential” for whom we are charged with ensuring appropriate “performance”.

Documents which underpin this policy

- The Diploma Programme: From principles into practice (International Baccalaureate Organisation)
- Framework for Gifted Education (Education Queensland)
- Gifted and Talented Students Action Plan 2008-2010
- Reflective Tool for Effective Implementation of the Framework for Gifted Education
- Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for Teachers (GERRIC/UNSW/Australian Government)