



# The Shape of the Australian Curriculum

Version 4.0



October 2012

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## Amendment history

Date	Version	Comment
May 2009	1.0	Approved by the Interim National Curriculum Board in May 2009 to guide the development of the first phase of the Australian Curriculum (English, mathematics, science and history).
October 2010	2.0	Updated to support implementation of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history, to provide the context for the next stage of development of the Foundation to Year 12 curriculum and to promote ongoing discussion about the shape of the Australian Curriculum as a whole. Approved by the ACARA Board 26 October 2010.
October 2011	3.0	The F–10 Curriculum Position paper on the whole curriculum, achievement standards and support for students with disability was endorsed by the Ministerial Council in July 2011 and informed the revision of The Shape of the Australian Curriculum v2.0.
October 2012	4.0	Updated to include information about the shape of the senior secondary curriculum and additional advice on how the Australian Curriculum meets the needs of the diverse range of students in Australian schools.

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## Purpose

1. The Shape of the Australian Curriculum v4.0 provides background to the development of and for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.
2. The first Shape of the Australian Curriculum (May 2009) was written to guide the development of the first phase of the Australian Curriculum (English, mathematics, science and history). It was approved by the Ministerial Council in September 2009. Subsequent versions were approved by Ministers in December 2010 (Version 2.0) and October 2011 (Version 3.0).

## Preamble

3. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for:
  - a national curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 in specified learning areas
  - a national assessment program aligned to the national curriculum that measures students' progress
  - a national data collection and reporting program that supports:
    - analysis, evaluation, research and resource allocation
    - accountability and reporting on schools
    - broader national achievement.
4. As part of its initial charter, ACARA was asked to commence curriculum development for English, mathematics, science and history. A second phase of work was authorised involving the development of an Australian Curriculum in geography, languages and the Arts. Subsequently, Australian education ministers agreed that a third phase of curriculum development will focus on health and physical education, information and communication technology, design and technology, economics and business, and civics and citizenship.
5. The establishment of ACARA can be seen as an outcome of many years of national collaboration in education. Twenty years ago, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs produced a collaborative statement on goals for schooling: the Hobart Declaration of 1989. Both the Hobart Declaration and the 1999 Adelaide Declaration authorised and stimulated the national effort.
6. The curriculum development work of ACARA is guided by the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, adopted by the Ministerial Council in December 2008. The Melbourne Declaration emphasises the importance of knowledge, understanding and skills of learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities as the basis for a curriculum designed to support 21st century learning.

# An Australian Curriculum

## Rationale

7. All Australian governments have committed to the goals of the Melbourne Declaration, which are that Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; and that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment is one of eight interrelated areas for action designed to achieve the Melbourne Declaration goals.
8. The rationale for introducing an Australian Curriculum centres on improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system.
  - Quality — an Australian Curriculum will contribute to the provision of a world-class education in Australia by setting out the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for life and work in the 21st century and by setting common high standards of achievement across the country.
  - Equity — an Australian Curriculum will provide a clear, shared understanding of what young people should be taught and the quality of learning expected of them, regardless of their circumstances, the type of school that they attend or the location of their school.
9. Education plays a critical role in shaping the lives of the nation's future citizens. To play this role effectively, the intellectual, personal, social and educational needs of young Australians must be addressed at a time when ideas about the goals of education are changing and will continue to evolve.
10. At the 60th Australian Education Council meeting held in Hobart in April 1989, education ministers produced a collaborative statement on goals for schooling: the Hobart Declaration. This statement was updated in 1999 as the Adelaide Declaration. In 2008, ministers nominated five major developments that, over the 20-year period, had changed the ways in which people interacted with each other and thought about the purposes of schooling. These changes were set out in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (see Box 1).

# An Australian Curriculum

## **Box 1: Changes over the period 1989-2008 with implications for education**

- Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of, and respect for, social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship.
- India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. Australians need to become 'Asia literate' by building strong relationships with Asia.
- Globalisation and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia, and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. Skilled jobs now dominate jobs growth, and people with university or vocational education and training qualifications fare much better in the employment market than early school-leavers. To maximise their opportunities for healthy, productive and rewarding futures, Australia's young people must be encouraged not only to complete secondary education, but also to proceed into further training or education.
- Complex environmental, social and economic pressures, such as climate change, that extend beyond national borders pose unprecedented challenges, requiring countries to work together in new ways. To meet these challenges, Australians must be able to comprehend and use scientific concepts and principles, and approach problem solving in new and creative ways.
- Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are changing the ways people share, use, develop and process information and technology, and young people need to be highly skilled in ICT. While schools already employ these technologies in learning, there is a need to increase their effectiveness significantly over the next decade.

*Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, December 2008, p.4*



## An Australian Curriculum

11. Education must not only respond to these remarkable changes but also, as far as possible, anticipate the conditions in which young Australians will need to function as individuals, citizens and workers when they complete their schooling. These future conditions are distant and difficult to predict. It is expected that almost all young Australians who begin primary school in 2011 will continue their initial education until 2022. Many will go on to further education or training through to the mid-2020s and later. Young people will need a wide and adaptive set of knowledge, understanding and skills and to meet the changing expectations of society and to contribute to the creation of a more productive, sustainable and just society.
12. An Australian Curriculum in the 21st century needs to acknowledge the changing ways in which young people will learn and the challenges that will continue to shape their learning in the future. The curriculum is important in setting out what will be taught, what students need to learn and the expected quality of that learning.
13. The commitment to develop a national curriculum reflects a willingness to work together, across geographical and school-sector boundaries, to provide a world-class education for all young Australians. Working nationally makes it possible to harness collective expertise and effort in the pursuit of this common goal. It also offers the potential of economies of scale and a substantial reduction in the duplication of time, effort and resources.
14. The Australian Curriculum also means that all young Australians can learn about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, of their contribution to Australia, and of the consequences of colonial settlement for Indigenous communities, past and present. For Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, the Australian Curriculum promotes the importance of pursuing excellence within education settings that respect and promote their cultural identity.

# An Australian Curriculum

## Goals of Education

15. The Melbourne Declaration commits ‘to supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens’ (see Box 2), and to promoting equity and excellence in education.

### **Box 2: Educational goals for young Australians**

Successful learners:

- develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy, and are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT, as a foundation for success in all learning areas
- are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
- are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines
- are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
- are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
- are on a pathway towards continued success in further education, training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives
- are motivated to reach their full potential.

Confident and creative individuals:

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future—are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others
- have the knowledge, skills, understandings and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
- have the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members

# An Australian Curriculum

- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions.

Active and informed citizens:

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- appreciate Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture
- understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures, and possess the knowledge, skills and understandings to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life
- are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia
- work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
- are responsible global and local citizens.

*Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, December 2008, pp. 8–9.*

# Development of the Australian Curriculum

## Propositions shaping the Australian Curriculum

16. The development of the Australian Curriculum is shaped by the following propositions.
- a) The Australian Curriculum recognises the entitlement of each student to knowledge, understanding and skills that provide a foundation for successful and lifelong learning and participation in the Australian community.
  - b) The Australian Curriculum is presented as a continuum of learning that makes clear to teachers what is to be taught across the years of schooling. It makes clear what students should learn and the quality of learning expected of them as they progress through school.
  - c) The Australian Curriculum is based on the assumptions that each student can learn and the needs of every student are important. It enables high expectations to be set for each student as teachers account for the current levels of learning of individual students and the different rates at which students develop.
  - d) The Australian Curriculum is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework and builds on its key learning outcomes, namely: children have a strong sense of identity; children are connected with, and contribute to, their world; children have a strong sense of wellbeing; children are confident and involved learners; and children are effective communicators.
  - e) The Australian Curriculum helps prepare all young Australians to become competent and contributing members of the community. It builds firm and meaningful foundation skills as well as providing the basis for developing expertise for the increasing number of students who move on to specialised advanced studies in academic disciplines, professions and technical trades.
  - f) The Australian Curriculum specifies what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling and is designed to be taught within the overall teaching time and with the resources available to teachers and students. School authorities make decisions about the allocation of time and other resources.
  - g) The Australian Curriculum provides for rigorous, in-depth study, preferring depth to breadth wherever a choice needs to be made, with consideration also being given to the overall teaching and learning time available.
  - h) For some learning areas, the Australian Curriculum will be written with the expectation that they will be taught in each year of schooling from Foundation to Year 10. For other areas, the Australian Curriculum will describe an entitlement that students will have the opportunity to learn across Foundation to Year 8, as well as additional learning they may choose and/or schools may choose to provide in Years 9–10.

# Development of the Australian Curriculum

- i) The primary audience for the Australian Curriculum is teachers. The curriculum is concise and expressed in plain language while preserving a complexity appropriate for professional practitioners. Consistency in terms of language and broad structure supports teachers in planning within and across learning areas.
- j) Jurisdictions, systems and schools will be able to implement the Australian Curriculum in ways that value teachers' professional knowledge, reflect local contexts and take into account individual students' family, cultural and community backgrounds. Schools and teachers determine pedagogical and other delivery considerations.
- k) The Australian Curriculum is established on a strong evidence base, which is related to learning, pedagogy and what works in professional practice, and has been benchmarked against international curricula.

## Curriculum development process

17. The process for developing the Australian Curriculum has been designed to generate broad engagement with, and discussion and feedback about, the shape and content of the Australian Curriculum.
18. It involves four interrelated phases: curriculum shaping, curriculum writing, implementation, and curriculum evaluation and review.
19. Curriculum shaping involves the development of a paper for each learning area setting out a broad outline of the proposed curriculum. Expert advice is sought in the development of an initial draft shape paper released for wide public consultation. Following modification of the draft in light of consultation and feedback, a final shape paper is published on ACARA's website at [www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au).
20. Curriculum writing involves teams of writers, supported by expert advisory groups and ACARA curriculum staff, who draft content descriptions and achievement standards for Foundation to Year 12. The draft Australian Curriculum for each learning area is released for public consultation and is subsequently revised in light of the feedback. The writing stage culminates in publication of the Australian Curriculum for the learning area.
21. Preparation for implementation sees the Australian Curriculum delivered in an online environment for school authorities, schools and teachers to use. ACARA works with state and territory curriculum and school authorities to support their ongoing implementation planning.
22. Curriculum monitoring, evaluation and review processes are put in place to monitor and review the Australian Curriculum based on implementation feedback. The evaluation process may result in minor changes to, or a revision of, the curriculum.

## Development of the Australian Curriculum

23. Major features, processes and broad timeframes for these phases are elaborated in the Curriculum Development Process paper, which can be found at <http://www.acara.edu.au>.

## Scope of the Australian Curriculum

24. The Australian Curriculum has been written to take account of the growth and development of young people across the years of schooling, the diverse needs of the student population in Australian schools, and the knowledge, understanding and skills that all young Australians are entitled to learn in terms of learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
25. The Australian Curriculum makes clear to teachers what is to be taught. It also makes clear to students what they should learn and the quality of learning expected of them. Schools are able to decide how best to deliver the curriculum, drawing on integrated approaches where appropriate and using pedagogical approaches that account for students' needs, interests and the school and community context. School authorities will be able to offer curriculum beyond that specified in the Australian Curriculum.
26. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians identifies three broad categories of outcomes that the curriculum should deliver for students (see Box 3). Thus the Australian Curriculum is developed in terms of learning area knowledge, skills and understandings and general capabilities.

## Scope of the Australian Curriculum

### **Box 3: Intended educational outcomes for young Australians**

*A solid foundation in knowledge, skills and understandings, and values on which further learning and adult life can be built:*

- The curriculum will include a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills. It will also enable students to build social and emotional intelligence, and nurture student wellbeing through health and physical education in particular. The curriculum will support students to relate well to others and foster an understanding of Australian society, citizenship and national values through the study of civics and citizenship. As a foundation for further learning and adult life, the curriculum will include practical knowledge and skills development in areas such as ICT and design and technology, which are central to Australia's skilled economy and provide crucial pathways to post-school success.

*Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications:*

- The curriculum will enable students to develop knowledge in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities and the Arts; to understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life; and open up new ways of thinking. It will also support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline, which provides the foundation for interdisciplinary approaches to innovation and complex problem solving.

*General capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise:*

- The curriculum will support young people to develop a range of generic and employability skills that have particular application to the world of work and further education and training, such as planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams. Young people also need to develop the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines.

*Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, December 2008, p.13*



## Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

27. The Australian Curriculum describes a learning entitlement for each Australian student. It sets out what young people should be taught (through the specification of curriculum content from learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities) and an expectation of the quality of their learning (depth of understanding and sophistication of skills described through achievement standards).
28. The Australian Curriculum has a three-dimensional design — discipline-based learning areas, general capabilities as essential 21st century skills and contemporary cross-curriculum priorities.
29. The learning areas for which Australian Curriculum will be developed are:
- English
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Humanities and Social Science (comprising History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business)
  - The Arts (comprising Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts)
  - Languages
  - Health and Physical Education
  - Technologies (comprising Digital Technologies and Design and Technologies)
30. The learning areas and the disciplines from which they are drawn provide a foundation of learning in schools because they reflect the way in which knowledge has, and will continue to be, developed and codified. However, 21st century learning does not fit neatly into a curriculum solely organised by learning areas or subjects that reflect the disciplines. Increasingly, in a world where knowledge itself is constantly growing and evolving, students need to develop a set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions, or general capabilities that apply across subject-based content and equip them to be lifelong learners able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world.
31. The general capabilities define knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that can be developed and applied across the curriculum to help students become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. The general capabilities to be included in the Australian Curriculum are:
- Literacy

# Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

- Numeracy
- Information and communication technology (ICT) capability
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability
- Ethical understanding
- Intercultural understanding.

32. As shown in Box 3, on page 15, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians sees these general capabilities as including 'planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams, the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines'.

33. The Australian Curriculum specifically covers the following general capabilities:

## **Literacy**

Students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students in listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

## **Numeracy**

Students become numerate as they develop the knowledge and skills to use mathematics confidently across other learning areas at school and in their lives more broadly. Numeracy involves students in recognising and understanding the role of mathematics in the world and having the dispositions and capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully.

## **Information communication technology (ICT) capability**

Students develop ICT capability as they learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively in all learning areas at school, and in their lives beyond school. The capability involves students in learning to make the most of the digital technologies available to them, adapting to new ways of doing things as technologies evolve and limiting the risks to themselves and others in a digital environment.

# Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

## **Critical and creative thinking**

Students develop capability in critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems. Critical and creative thinking are integral to activities that require students to think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school.

## **Personal and social capability**

Students develop personal and social capability as they learn to understand themselves and others, and manage their relationships, learning, lives and work more effectively. The capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others and understanding relationships, establishing and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills.

## **Ethical understanding**

Students develop ethical understanding as they identify and investigate the nature of ethical concepts, values and character traits, and understand how reasoning can assist ethical judgment. Ethical understanding involves students in building a strong personal and socially oriented ethical outlook that helps them to manage context, conflict and uncertainty, and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others.

## **Intercultural understanding**

Students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others. They come to understand how personal, group and national identities are shaped, and the variable and changing nature of culture. The capability involves students in learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.

## Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

34. The Australian Curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students by delivering a relevant, contemporary and engaging curriculum that build on the educational goals of the Melbourne Declaration. The Melbourne Declaration identifies three key areas that need to be addressed for the benefit of both individuals and Australia as a whole. In the Australian Curriculum these have become priorities that provide students with the tools and language to engage with and better understand their world at a range of levels. The priorities provide dimensions which will enrich the curriculum through development of considered and focused content that fits naturally within learning areas. They enable the delivery of learning area content at the same time as developing knowledge, understanding and skills relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia or Sustainability. Incorporation of the priorities will encourage conversations between learning areas and between students, teachers and the wider community. The cross-curriculum priorities to be included in the Australian Curriculum are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia
- Sustainability.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world's oldest continuous living cultures. Students will understand that contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strong, resilient, rich and diverse. The knowledge and understanding gained through this priority will enhance the ability of all young people to participate positively in the ongoing development of Australia.

### **Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia**

The Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia priority will ensure that students learn about and recognise the diversity within and between the countries of the Asia region. They will develop knowledge and understanding of Asian societies, cultures, beliefs and environments, and the connections between the peoples of Asia, Australia, and the rest of the world. Asia literacy provides students with the skills to communicate and engage with the peoples of Asia so they can effectively live, work and learn in the region.

### **Sustainability**

The Sustainability priority will allow young Australians to develop the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for them to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It will enable individuals and communities to reflect on ways of interpreting and engaging with the world. The Sustainability priority is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence.

# Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

## The curriculum across the years of schooling

35. For some learning areas, the Australian Curriculum has been written with the intention that it is taught to all students in each year of schooling from Foundation to Year 10, with decisions to be made subsequently about further learning in the senior secondary years. For other learning areas, the Australian Curriculum will be written for Foundation to Year 10, but with the intention that it is taught to all students across Foundation to Year 8, with subsequent decisions to be made about further learning in Years 9, 10, and then for senior secondary schooling.
36. The relative emphasis given to each of the eight learning areas varies across the stages of schooling according to factors such as:
- making literacy and numeracy priority areas in the early years
  - increasing emphasis on all eight learning areas in the upper primary years and in Years 7–8
  - creating greater opportunities for students to choose learning pathways that build individual needs and interests in secondary schooling.
37. In the early years of schooling, priority is given to literacy and numeracy development because these are the foundations on which further learning is built. The foundation for literacy is built primarily in English and the foundation for numeracy primarily in mathematics. However, both literacy and numeracy must be reinforced and strengthened through learning in other contexts, including science, history and geography. Priority is also given to movement skills development, participation in physical activity and the development of safer and healthier personal practices through the teaching of health and physical education. Equally, all students in these early years will have the opportunity to develop their sensory, cognitive and affective appreciation of the world around them through exploratory and creative learning in The Arts and Technologies. The opportunity to learn a language may also be available subject to school and curriculum authority arrangements.
38. In the upper primary years and the first years of lower secondary schooling, the Australian Curriculum continues to prioritise English and literacy and mathematics and numeracy, along with the opportunity for a broad education drawing from each of the eight learning areas outlined in the Melbourne Declaration. The Australian Curriculum across these years of schooling provides core or common learning opportunities, while also providing opportunities for students to deepen their learning in particular areas according to their interests and needs.

## Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

39. The design of the Australian Curriculum for Years 9 and 10 recognises that many students commence senior secondary pathways and programs, including vocational pathways, in these years. The curriculum is designed to provide increased opportunities for students to make choices about learning pathways and to deepen their understanding in each learning area. It is based on the assumption that school and/or curriculum authorities will provide learning opportunities in English, mathematics, science, history, and health and physical education for all students and will also provide learning opportunities from other learning areas and in vocational and applied learning, including National Trade Cadetships. In Years 9 and 10, there is flexibility for students to undertake more specialised learning pathways that ensure all students are fully engaged and prepared to continue learning into the senior secondary years.
40. The senior secondary curriculum provides students with increased opportunities to make choices about pathways through school and beyond. These choices are informed by previous success and enjoyment, future options for training, learning or employment, and the setting in which the learning is to occur. The senior school curriculum offers more opportunities for specialisation in learning, including within the regular school program and through accredited vocational education and training.

### The diversity of learners

41. ACARA is committed to the development of a high-quality curriculum for all Australian students that promotes excellence and equity in education.
42. All students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning programs drawn from a challenging curriculum that addresses their individual learning needs. The Australian Curriculum recognises that the needs of all students encompass cognitive, affective, physical, social, and aesthetic curriculum experiences.
43. The three-dimensional design of the Australian Curriculum, comprising learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, provides teachers with flexibility to cater for the diverse needs of students across Australia and to personalise their learning.
44. ACARA will publish explicit advice for teachers, along with examples, on using the three-dimensional design of the Australian Curriculum to address the diversity of learning needs, including the needs of students with disability, gifted and talented students, and students for whom English is an additional language or dialect (EAL/D).
45. ACARA acknowledges that many **students with disability** are able to achieve educational standards commensurate with their peers, as long as the necessary adjustments are made to the way in which they are taught and to the means through which they demonstrate their learning.

## Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

46. In some cases curriculum adjustments are necessary to provide equitable opportunities for students to access age-equivalent learning area content. Teachers can draw from Australian Curriculum content at different levels along the Foundation to Year 10 sequences. In particular, teachers can use the extended general capabilities learning continua in Literacy, Numeracy and Personal and social capability to adjust the focus of learning according to individual student need.
47. Teachers can use the Australian Curriculum flexibly to meet the individual learning needs of **gifted and talented** students.
48. Teachers can enrich student learning by providing students with opportunities to work with learning area content in more depth or breadth; emphasising specific aspects of the general capabilities learning continua (for example, the higher order cognitive skills of the Critical and creative thinking capability); and/or focusing on cross-curriculum priorities. Teachers can also accelerate student learning by drawing on content from later levels in the Australian Curriculum and/or from local state and territory teaching and learning materials.
49. Students for whom **English is another language or dialect (EAL/D)** enter Australian schools at different ages and at different stages of English language learning and have various educational backgrounds in their first languages. Whilst many EAL/D students bring already highly developed literacy (and numeracy) skills in their own language to their learning of Standard Australian English, there is a significant number of students who are not literate in their first language, and have had little or no formal schooling.
50. While the objectives of the Australian Curriculum are the same for all students, EAL/D students must reach these objectives while simultaneously learning a new language and learning content and skills through that new language. These students may require additional time and support, along with teaching that explicitly addresses their individual language learning needs. Students who have had no formal schooling will need additional time and support in order to acquire skills for effective learning in formal settings.
51. A national *English as an Additional Language or Dialect: Teacher Resource* has been developed to support teachers in making the Australian Curriculum: Foundation to Year 10 in each learning area accessible to EAL/D students. This resource is located at [www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/student\\_diversity/eald\\_teacher\\_resource.html](http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/student_diversity/eald_teacher_resource.html).

# Curriculum content

## Organisation of the Australian Curriculum F-10

52. The key elements of the F-10 Australian Curriculum in each learning area are the rationale, aims, curriculum content and achievement standards. Year level descriptions or band descriptions provide information about the learning contexts that apply to the content descriptions and achievement standards.
53. The curriculum content, presented as content descriptions, specifies the knowledge, understanding and skills that teachers are to teach and young people are expected to learn across the years of schooling.
54. F–10 content descriptions are accompanied by ‘content elaborations’ which, as support material, provide illustrations and/or examples of the content descriptions.
55. The achievement standards describe what students are typically able to understand and able to do. They describe expected achievement. Across F–10 the set of achievement standards describe a broad sequence of expected learning.
56. The sequence of achievement standards within each learning area or subject emphasises the depth of conceptual understanding, the sophistication of skills and the ability to apply essential knowledge expected of students.
57. Achievement standards will be accompanied by sets of annotated student work samples, as support material, to assist teachers to make judgments about the extent to which each achievement standard has been met.

## Learning area knowledge, understanding and skills

58. The Australian Curriculum describes knowledge, understanding and skills organised by learning areas. The selection of content for particular learning areas takes into account the rapid expansion in bodies of knowledge and the challenges this presents for curriculum development.
59. For each learning area, the Australian Curriculum emphasises the knowledge, understanding and skills that form the entitlement of a learning area. Teachers are able to choose how best to introduce concepts and processes, and how to progressively deepen understanding to maximise the engagement and learning of every student.
60. The Australian Curriculum is designed to ensure that students develop the knowledge and understanding on which the major disciplines are based. Each discipline offers a distinctive lens through which we interpret experience, determine what counts as evidence and a good argument for action, scrutinise knowledge and argument, make judgments about value and add to knowledge.
61. Rather than being self-contained or fixed, disciplines are interconnected, dynamic and growing. A discipline-based curriculum should allow for cross-disciplinary learning that broadens and enriches each student’s learning.



## Curriculum content

62. In each learning area, the Australian Curriculum provides a rationale for the choice of curriculum content. The rationale describes the nature of the subject in general terms and provides an outline of how learning in this course relates to the contemporary world and current practice. It also explains the place and purpose of the subject, how learning in the subject is valuable and how it contributes to meeting the national goals of schooling.
63. The scope and sequence for each learning area ensures that learning is appropriately ordered and unnecessary repetition is avoided.

### General capabilities

64. General capabilities are represented to different degrees in each of the learning areas. Some are best developed within specific learning areas. Others can be developed in any learning area depending on teachers' choices of classroom activities. Curriculum documents make explicit how the general capabilities can be addressed in each learning area and allow flexibility in implementation.
65. For each of the general capabilities, a learning continuum has been developed that describes the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students can be expected to have developed at particular stages of schooling. The general capabilities have been developed to enhance learning area content and will assist teachers to plan for and to guide student learning of these important areas of the curriculum. Teachers are expected to teach and assess general capabilities to the extent that they are incorporated within each learning area. State and territory curriculum and school authorities will determine whether and how student learning of the general capabilities will be separately assessed and reported.

### Cross-curriculum priorities

66. The cross-curriculum priorities are contemporary issues about which young Australians should learn. The cross-curriculum priorities to be addressed in the Australian Curriculum F-10 are:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
  - Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia
  - Sustainability.
67. Each of these priorities is represented in learning areas in ways appropriate to that area. For each of the cross-curriculum priorities, a set of organising ideas has been developed. These are consistent across the curriculum and are reinforced in learning areas.

## Curriculum content

### Development of the F-10 curriculum on a year-by-year or bands-of-school-years basis

68. In English and Mathematics, much is known about sequences of learning, and there is empirical evidence to guide the writing of curriculum on a year-by-year basis. For science, history and geography the curriculum has also been developed on a year-by-year basis although the descriptions of skills in these areas, for example, are by bands of years.
69. Decisions about the structure of the curriculum for the remaining learning areas will be the subject of consultation during the development process and will take into account:
- a) the evidence base available to guide writers – that is, what is known about the typical sequence of student learning and the development of competence in a given learning area
  - b) the frequency with which a subject is expected to be taught to all students — that is, whether it is expected that all students will learn the subject in each year of schooling
  - c) the extent to which it is desirable to provide flexibility to schools in how they deliver the curriculum — that is, whether writing the curriculum in bands of years provides schools with greater flexibility to decide when to teach particular content, while bearing in mind the increased risk of repetition of content for students who move between schools.

### Organisation of the senior secondary Australian Curriculum

70. The senior secondary Australian Curriculum will be written for subjects as agreed to nationally.
71. The senior secondary Australian Curriculum comprises rationale and aims, learning outcomes, content descriptions and achievement standards.
72. Content descriptions detail the knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught and learned within a given subject, including the Australian Curriculum general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities that naturally align with the subject.
73. Achievement standards refer to the quality of learning (the depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill) demonstrated by students within a given subject. The senior secondary achievement standards are subject-specific and align with the major dimensions of learning as described in the learning outcomes and detailed in the content for the subject. Typically these dimensions are categorised into knowledge and understanding, and skills and written as five levels of achievement.

## Curriculum content

74. State and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities continue to be responsible for the structure and organisation of their senior secondary courses and will determine how they integrate the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards into their courses. They will determine the assessment and certification specifications for their courses that use the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards and any additional information, guidelines and rules to satisfy local requirements.

# Quality assurance and review of the Australian Curriculum

75. The development of the Australian Curriculum takes account of the following assumptions:
- a) The teaching and learning programs offered by schools are based on the Australian Curriculum, in conjunction with state or territory curriculum, and other learning opportunities and activities determined by the school.
  - b) The Australian Curriculum for each learning area describes core content that should be taught when that curriculum is offered.
  - c) Where Australian Curriculum exists for a learning area, it should form the basis of what is taught in schools for that learning area.
  - d) For any year of schooling, Foundation to Year 10, the Australian Curriculum is written so that it should not take up more than 80 per cent of the total teaching time available in schools, with this proportion peaking in Years 7 and 8, and reducing significantly in Years 9 and 10 as core expectations are reduced.
  - e) The Australian Curriculum content for any learning area should be ‘teachable’ within an indicative time allocation that ACARA sets for its curriculum writers, to avoid overcrowding and to allow for the inclusion of other content.
  - f) Decisions relating to the organisation and delivery of the Australian Curriculum, including such matters as time allocations, rest with education authorities and schools. School and curriculum authorities can specify more teaching time.
76. Development of the curriculum is based on the assumption that teachers, when planning for teaching and learning, will account for current levels of learning of individual students and the different rates at which students develop.
77. The design of the curriculum assumes that schools are best able to decide how to deliver the curriculum and will, for example, apply integrated approaches where appropriate and use pedagogical approaches that account for students’ needs, interests and the school and community context.
78. The Australian Curriculum leaves scope for education authorities and/or schools to offer additional learning opportunities beyond those provided by the Australian Curriculum.
79. Teachers will use a range of different assessment strategies to ascertain what each student has learnt — actual achievement — and will make judgments about the extent and quality of each student’s achievement in relation to the Australian Curriculum achievement standards.

## Teaching, assessing and reporting

80. Reporting to parents will provide information about a student's actual achievement against the achievement standards.
81. The use of Australian Curriculum achievement standards as a common reference point for reporting to parents will contribute to national consistency in reporting.
82. Current requirements for reporting to parents include the requirement for student achievement to be reported in terms of A–E grades (or an equivalent 5-point scale).
83. Education authorities and individual schools are able to determine, in consultation with parents and communities, the style and format of reporting that best meets local needs and circumstances, including provision of any additional elements of student reports. This might include written comments about the quality of learning demonstrated by the student; indicators of student effort, engagement, behaviour and improvement; student self-assessment; and future learning goals.
84. As the Australian Curriculum is being implemented, ACARA will work with the states and territories and the Australian Government to investigate ways that may strengthen national consistency in reporting of student learning.
85. The Australian Curriculum is a dynamic curriculum. The online publication of the curriculum facilitates ongoing monitoring and review, as well as providing the opportunity to update the curriculum in a well-managed and effectively communicated manner.
86. Any updating will take into account review and evaluation data; new national and international knowledge and practice about learning, teaching, curriculum design and implementation; and contemporary research in discipline and cross-discipline areas.
87. In this way, the Australian Curriculum will be subject to evaluation and validation during implementation and will continue to be benchmarked against the curricula of countries that are leading the world in education excellence and performance.

# Towards a world-class Australian Curriculum

88. The Australian Curriculum provides a world-class curriculum. The Australian Curriculum:
- has been subject to extensive and sustained consultation during its development
  - has been benchmarked against curricula of leading nations during the development process
  - sets challenging standards for each student
  - does not overload the curriculum
  - pursues deep learning.
89. The Australian Curriculum has been written to equip young Australians with the knowledge, understanding and skills that will enable them to engage effectively with, and prosper in, society, to compete in a globalised world and to thrive in the information-rich workplaces of the future.
90. While the traditional structure of scope and sequence within discrete learning areas is retained, the Australian Curriculum gives explicit attention to seven general capabilities and three cross-curriculum priorities. This will ensure that Australian students are able to learn across disciplines, to develop and build new expertise, as well as function effectively in the communities and workplaces of the 21st century.
91. The Australian Curriculum is published online, via the website <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>, which is accessible to all members of the Australian community. Publishing the Australian Curriculum online provides flexibility in how people use and organise the curriculum. For example, users can view, download and print the curriculum for a particular learning area at one year level or across multiple year levels. They can also view, download and print content with a focus on the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.