Language-specific curriculum

The Australian Curriculum: Languages is designed to enable all students to engage in learning a language in addition to English.

The design of the Australian Curriculum: Languages recognises the features that languages share as well as the distinctiveness of specific languages.

The curriculum includes both language-specific curricula and a Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

There are aspects of the curriculum that pertain to all languages. The key concepts of language, culture, and learning underpin the learning area. They also provide the basis for a common rationale and set of aims for all languages.

What languages are being developed for the Australian Curriculum: Languages?

The languages for which F-10 Australian Curriculum will be developed by the end of 2013 are:

- A Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages
- Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Further work will be undertaken to determine the process and timelines for developing Australian Curriculum in additional languages beyond those listed above (in the first instance, for Auslan, Classical languages, Hindi and Turkish).

What type of learner will the Australian Curriculum: Languages be aimed at?

For the majority of languages, one curriculum pathway will be developed for each language in Years F-10 by the end of 2013, pitched to the dominant cohort of learners for that language in the current Australian context. Teachers may however choose to use the F-10 curriculum for a specific language to cater for learners of different backgrounds by making appropriate adjustments to differentiate the learning for these students.

Pathways for second language learners, background language learners and first language learners are being developed as appropriate to cater for the dominant cohort(s) of students learning each specific language within the current Australian context. The pathways for second language learners and background language learners will include provision for F–10 continuity in the language as well as an additional Year 7-10 sequence (Year 7 Entry). The first language learner pathway has been developed as a Year 7-10 sequence (Year 7 Entry).

For F-10 Chinese, pathways are being developed for three learner groups – second language learners, background language learners and first language learners. For Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages, a framework is being developed that caters for different learner pathways that also take account of the state of the particular language involved.

What is the structure of the draft Australian Curriculum: Languages?

Two major variables influence the curriculum architecture: learner background and time–on–task. These two variables, taken together, influence the structuring of the curriculum and, more specifically, curriculum content and achievement standards.

The design of the Australian Curriculum: Languages takes account of the different entry points into languages, across Foundation to Year 10, which reflects current practice. This means that for each pathway (except for the first language learner pathway) in each language, there is a sequence for Foundation to Year 10 and another for Years 7–10.

The content in the Australian Curriculum: Languages is organised by two interrelated strands:
Communicating: using language for communicative purposes in interpreting, creating, and exchanging meaning.

Understanding: analysing language and culture as a resource for interpreting and creating meaning.

Content descriptions aim to ensure that students develop the skills, knowledge, and understanding required to communicate in the target language, develop an intercultural capability in communication and understand themselves as communicators.

Achievement standards describe what students are expected to achieve and how well.

The Languages curriculum (content and achievement standards) is organised in bands of year levels for each sequence of learning:

**Foundation – Year 10 sequence**

- Foundation–Year 4 (Level 1)
- Years 5–6 (Level 2)
- Years 7–8 (Level 3)
- Years 9–10 (Level 4)

**Years 7–10 sequence (Year 7 entry)**

- Years 7–8 (Level 1)
- Years 9–10 (Level 2)

For the primary years, captured in the F–10 sequence, the curriculum content is described for Foundation to Year 2, Years 3–4 and Years 5–6. This takes into account literacy development as a key consideration (Foundation to Year 2 content capturing ‘initial literacy’ and Years 3–4 content capturing ‘developing literacy’). A single achievement standard (Level 1) is described to capture the Foundation to Year 4 sequence of learning. Level 2 of the F–10 sequence of achievement standards describes typical achievement towards the end of the primary years. This curriculum structure provides flexibility for schools to make program arrangements best suited to their local context and needs.

Achievement standards are language-specific and pathway-specific. Within each language, Levels 1 and 2 in the Foundation–Year 10 sequence are not equivalent to Levels 1 and 2 in the Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

**What national and international curricula and research was drawn upon to develop the draft Australian Curriculum: Languages?**

Languages curricula from all Australian states and territories have informed the development of the draft Australian Curriculum: Languages for Chinese and Italian and will continue to inform the development of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages and the draft curricula for the remaining languages.

The development of the draft Australian Curriculum: Languages has taken account of curriculum documents from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACFTL) the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Ontario, Scotland, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

A full range of references used in developing the Australian Curriculum: Languages can be found in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages*.

**Is this curriculum for generalist or specialist teachers?**

The draft Australian Curriculum: Languages is written for use by teachers with specialist language expertise.

**Are there indicative hours for the Australian Curriculum: Languages?**

The curriculum has been developed based on an indicative allocation of hours. These indicative hours represent an assumption about time on task made only for the purposes of curriculum development.
ACARA provided an indicative time allocation of 350 hours for Foundation to Year 6 and a further 160 hours for each of Years 7-8 and Years 9-10 as a guide for writers in developing the curriculum.

The provision of indicative hours is not designed to establish time allocations or sequences of learning for teaching and learning in schools. Schools and school authorities will make policy decisions regarding time and sequences of learning when implementing the curriculum.

**How does the draft Australian Curriculum: Languages for Chinese and Italian compare with current curricula in states and territories?**

The draft Australian Curriculum: Languages for Chinese and Italian draws on current Languages curricula in each state and territory and reflects best practice in language education nationally. There are many features of the curriculum that teachers will find familiar.

**What is the timeline for development and implementation?**

The draft F-10 Australian Curriculum: Languages for Chinese and Italian will be available for national consultation until 12 April 2013.

Further languages are currently being developed for the Australian Curriculum: Languages, along with the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages, and these will be released for consultation during the first half of 2013.

Following analysis of consultation feedback on the draft curricula and draft Framework, ACARA will determine directions for revision and prepare final drafts.

It is anticipated that the final Australian Curriculum: Languages for Chinese and Italian will be endorsed by Ministers and published in late 2013, and available for implementation by state and territory education authorities from 2014. Decisions about implementation timelines are the responsibility of state and territory education authorities.

**Why is learning languages important in schools?**

The study of languages contributes to the general education of all students. It operates from the fundamental principle that for all students, learning to communicate in two or more languages is a rich, challenging experience of engaging with and participating in the linguistic and cultural diversity of our interconnected world.

The Australian Curriculum recognises Australia’s distinctive and dynamic migration history. Language learning builds upon student’s intercultural understanding and sense of identity as they are encouraged to explore and recognise their own linguistic, social, and cultural practices and identities as well as those associated with speakers of the language being learnt.

Learning languages also develops students’ overall literacy, strengthening literacy-related capabilities that are transferable across learning areas.