

General capabilities

What are general capabilities?

In the Australian Curriculum, general capabilities refer to a set of 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. Throughout their schooling, students develop and use these capabilities across all learning areas, in co-curricular programs such as sport, school camps and drama productions, and in their lives outside school.

There are seven general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and communication technology competence
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social competence
- Ethical behaviour
- Intercultural understanding.

Why does the Australian Curriculum include general capabilities?

The Australian Curriculum is based on the belief that to meet the changing expectations of society and to contribute to the creation of a more productive, sustainable and just society, young people will need a wide and adaptive set of knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions. Though the curriculum is organised by learning areas, it also includes general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities which add richness and depth to the learning areas and help students see the interconnectedness and relevance of their learning.

How are general capabilities evident in the Australian Curriculum?

In the Australian Curriculum, general capabilities are embedded in the content of each learning area as appropriate. As part of the online curriculum, icons are used to indicate where general capabilities have been incorporated into the content descriptions for each learning area. This will vary for each capability depending on the learning area. Teachers may find further opportunities to develop and apply general capabilities according to their choice of classroom activities.

The general capabilities of Literacy, Numeracy, ICT competence, and Critical and creative thinking are essential tools for learning and are evident in the content of the English, mathematics, science and history learning areas. While the development of literacy and numeracy rests primarily in English and mathematics respectively, the development and application of these capabilities across the curriculum is essential to effective student learning. Further information about the relationship between English and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy in the Australian Curriculum is provided in the introductions to the Literacy and Numeracy capabilities.

Ethical behaviour, Personal and social competence and Intercultural understanding, which focus on ways of acting, behaving and learning to live with others, are more strongly represented in some learning areas than in others. They are most evident wherever the personal and social dimensions of learning are highlighted.

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Why has ACARA developed specific materials for general capabilities?

To ensure the strong and coherent inclusion of the general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, ACARA has prepared a conceptual statement and learning continuum for each capability. Originally these materials were developed to support writers of learning area curriculum (Foundation to Year 10). They have been further developed to help teachers plan for and guide students' development of the general capabilities in the learning areas.

For Literacy and Numeracy, the continua describe learning at the end of Years 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, recognising that national literacy and numeracy assessment occurs in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The other five capabilities describe learning at the end of Years 2, 6 and 10, to approximate the end of early childhood, primary and junior secondary years in most states and territories.

How will teachers be able to use the general capabilities materials?

When finalised, teachers will be able to use the materials:

- to develop a shared understanding of the nature, scope and sequence of the general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum
- to confirm their understanding of intended learning wherever general capabilities are identified in learning area content descriptions and elaborations
- as a guide for planning students' development of the general capabilities in school and classroom learning programs.

The materials are not intended as tools for assessment. Teachers are expected to teach and assess general capabilities where they are incorporated into learning area content. State and territory school authorities will determine the extent to which student learning of the general capabilities will be assessed and reported.

Where can I find more information about the general capabilities?

Overviews that describe the nature, scope and significance of each general capability are on the general capabilities section of the Australian Curriculum website.

In addition, the conceptual statements and learning continua for each general capability are published on the Australian Curriculum website for consultation from mid-June to early August 2011.

Further work on the Literacy and Numeracy statements is being undertaken to guide the future development of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

For more information go to the general capabilities section on the Australian Curriculum website at: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>.

To provide feedback on the general capabilities materials go to: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Consultation>.