AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING AUTHORITY

Curriculum Design Paper

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Curriculum Design — Foundation to Year 12

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Amendment History

Date	Version	Comment
18 May 2009	1.0	Approved by the ACARA Board (21–22 May).
5 November 2009	2.0	Amended to include changes approved by the ACARA Board (6–7 October); separation of specifications for F–10 and senior secondary; update on achievement standards.
February 2010	2.1	Amended to include updated nomenclature.
2011	2.2	Amended to align with the Shape of the Australian Curriculum v2.0 and the achievement standards F–10.
March 2012	3.0	Amended to align with the Shape of the Australian Curriculum v3.0 and the updated design specifications for the senior secondary curriculum.
May 2013	3.1	Amended to include explanatory notes clarifying indicative times.

1.1 Purpose

This document provides background information and design specifications to guide the writing of the Australian Curriculum. The document has been and will continue to be revised from time to time, taking account of issues that have arisen during the curriculum development process and/or as the scope of the Australian Curriculum changes.

1.2 Related documents

This document should be read in conjunction with other key documents, namely:

- Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008)
- The Shape of the Australian Curriculum v3.0
- The Shape of the Australian Curriculum documents for each curriculum area
- The Curriculum Development Process v6.0

Amendment History

The work of the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) in developing the Australian Curriculum is guided by the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008). *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* v3.0, builds on this work and provides detail about the context for and development of the Australian Curriculum.

> ***Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment***
>
> *Curriculum will be designed to develop successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.*
>
> *State, Territory and Commonwealth governments will work together with all school sectors to ensure world-class curriculum in Australia. Together the national curriculum and curriculum specified at the State, Territory and local levels will enable every student to develop:*
>
> - *A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built*
> - *Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications*
> - *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.*
>
> *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* December 2008
>
> ***Building Australia's future***
>
> *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.*
>
> *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* October 2011

A curriculum for the twenty-first century will need to reflect and acknowledge the changing nature of young people as learners and the challenges and demands that will continue to shape their learning in the future. Young people will need a wide and adaptive set of skills to meet the changing expectations of society and to contribute to the creation of a more productive, sustainable and just society.

Curriculum is only one element of education that influences how well young Australians are prepared for their futures, but it is important because it sets the level of expectation for their learning. High-performing countries set high expectations. They support the fulfilment of those expectations with high-quality teaching, school and system leadership, and commitment and support from families, communities, business and industry. Providing high quality education is valuable to the community at large, and justifies people's investments of time, effort and resources.

The Australian Curriculum F-12 is developed as a web-based publication that is, using web technologies to embed links and enable multiple views and access. The key elements of the Australian Curriculum will be curriculum content (with content elaborations) and achievement standards (with work sample portfolios).

3.1. Curriculum content

Curriculum content identifies what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn. Curriculum content includes knowledge, understanding and skills that will be described for a particular learning area/subject at a particular year level (for example, Mathematics, Year 5) or bands of years (for example, the Arts, Years 5-6).

The curriculum content, presented as content descriptions, specifies the knowledge, understanding and skills that young people are expected to learn and that teachers are expected to teach across the years of schooling. The F–10 content descriptions will be accompanied by 'content elaborations' which, as support material, will provide illustrations and/or examples of the content descriptions.

3.2 Achievement standards

Achievement standards describe what students are typically able to understand and do. Achievement standards will describe the learning (understanding and skills) expected of students at each year level from F-10.

Across F–10 the set of achievement standards describe a broad sequence of expected learning. The sequence of achievement standards provides teachers with a framework of growth and development in a curriculum area. This will assist teachers to plan and monitor learning, and to make judgments about student achievement.

Achievement standards can support formative and summative assessment practices and aid consistency of assessment and reporting across states and territories.

For each learning area the achievement standards will be accompanied by portfolios of annotated work samples that illustrate the expected learning.

3.3 Foundation to Year 10

For F-10, the curriculum content and achievement standards will be presented with other information that sets the context for what is to be taught. This information will include:

- Rationale
- Aims
- Organisation of the <learning area/subject> curriculum
- Representation of general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

3.4 Senior Secondary

ACARA will develop the senior secondary Australian Curriculum, which will specifically include content and achievement standards. State and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities will develop courses that contain the 'national' content and achievement standards as well as additional information, guidelines and rules that meet local assessment and certification requirements. Senior secondary courses are approved by the relevant state and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authority.

The specifications developed by ACARA for each subject in the senior secondary Australian Curriculum include:

a. key elements:
   - subject rationale and aims
   - unit learning outcomes
   - content descriptions
   - achievement standards

b. information that:
   - outlines the purpose of each unit in relation to the overall rationale and aims
   - explains the structure of, and connection between, the units
   - explains connections between the F-10 Australian Curriculum and the senior secondary curriculum in the learning area
   - identifies any assumptions about prior learning
   - defines key terms and gives any key references.

This section provides key considerations for the process of curriculum writing. In particular, curriculum writers will consider the following matters:

- **The nature of the learner and learning**, including consideration of how the Australian Curriculum will take into account the developmental changes in young people attending school.
- The **whole curriculum** and how Australian Curriculum learning areas relate to it.
- **Structural matters**, including commencement and completion of school and transition points.
- **Inclusivity** and how the Australian Curriculum will provide for the educational needs of every child.
- **General capabilities**, describing how the Australian Curriculum will attend to general capabilities learning.
- **Cross-curriculum priorities**, describing perspectives that should be included in each learning area.

4.1 Nature of the learner and learning

The Australian Curriculum will detail what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn for each year of schooling. The curriculum will describe the knowledge, understanding and skills and that students will be expected to develop for each learning area across the years of schooling. This description of curriculum content will result in a curriculum sequence that will represent what is known about the progression of learning in that area.

Teachers understand the developmental diversity of the students they teach and are responsible for organising learning opportunities to meet individual learning needs. While the curriculum will be described by years or bands of years, its organisation and presentation will take account of changing developmental characteristics of students across Foundation to Year 12. There are varied views about the best way to organise the curriculum into phases or stages, but there is general agreement that the curriculum should not predetermine the instructional approach to be taken by teachers and should provide some flexibility for them to accommodate different levels of student development and achievement and approaches to learning.

Writing of the Australian Curriculum will take account of the broad characteristics of the learner and learning within four overlapping age bands. These are documented in the shape of the Australian Curriculum v3.0 (pp. 15-16). While written on a year or band-of-year basis, the curriculum will need to acknowledge that, in any one year-group, there will be a significant range of achievement. Curriculum documents will be written in a way that assists teachers to identify and respond to this range of achievement.

4.2 The whole curriculum

In developing a national curriculum for particular learning areas, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* is a key reference point. The Declaration's second goal is that 'All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' and the declaration states that curriculum will be designed to develop such learners. The Declaration (p. 13) also proposes that the Australian Curriculum (and state or territory and local curriculum) will develop the following:

- A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built.
- Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications.
- 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 Australian Curriculum documents will indicate how learning in each area contributes to the national goals and the agreed features of a quality curriculum. This advice will assist teachers to see the whole curriculum, as well as how learning in each national curriculum area contributes to the whole. The whole view of curriculum includes state/territory and school-developed curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum for each learning area or subject describes core content that should be taught to students studying in that learning area/subject. Where Australian Curriculum exists for a learning area or subject, it should be taught in schools for that learning area.

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. This proportion peaks in Years 7 and 8 and reduces significantly in Years 9 and 10 as core expectations are reduced.

The Australian Curriculum content for any learning area should be 'teachable' within the indicative time allocation that ACARA sets for its curriculum writers, to avoid overcrowding and to allow for the inclusion of other content. Such an approach is not designed to establish time allocations for education systems and sectors, schools or teachers. Rather, it is a design assumption about relative emphasis given to curriculum areas and is intended to guide writers on the teaching/learning time that they can assume as they write the curriculum.

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.

Curriculum writers will be guided by the indicative time allocations as shown in Table 1 for Foundation to Year 10. The senior secondary curriculum is written notionally to 50–60 hours per semester unit.

Table 1: Indicative times for writers

Learning Area	Subject	Year F	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
English		27%	27%	27%	22%	22%	20%	20%	12%	12%	12%	12%
Mathematics		18%	18%	18%	18%	18%	16%	16%	12%	12%	12%	12%
Science		4%	4%	4%	7%	7%	7%	7%	10%	10%	12%	12%
Humanities and Social Sciences	History	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%
	Geography	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%*	5%*
	Economics and Business		-				2%	2%	2%	2%	5%*	5%*
	Civics and Citizenship				2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%*	2%*
The Arts		4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	8%	8%	8%*	8%*
Health and Physical Education		8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%
Languages		equivalent to 5% per year							8%	8%	8%*	8%*
Technologies	Design and Technologies	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	6%	6%	8%	8%	4%*	4%*
	Digital Technologies										4%*	4%*
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TIME ALLOCATED		72%	72%	72%	79%	79%	79%	79%	80%	80%	49%	49%
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TIME UNALLOCATED		28%	28%	28%	21%	21%	21%	21%	20%	20%	51%	51%

Notes:

a) The indicative times are provided as percentages of total teaching time and are developed to guide curriculum writers only.
b) Decisions about the actual organisation and delivery of curriculum, including opportunities for integration are best taken at the school level.
c) The time taken for individual students to learn a body of knowledge, understanding and skill will vary significantly, with some students learning more quickly and others needing more time.
d) The estimated percentages assume a total of 1000 hours of teaching time each year (25 hours of teaching time each week; 40 weeks/year).
e) 1% equates to approximately 10 hours per year.
*f) * indicates that the Australian Curriculum will be developed on the assumption that the curriculum could be taught as an elective.*

4.3 Structural matters

Decisions about the structure of the curriculum for each learning area will be the subject of consultation during the development process and will take into account:

- 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/subject
- the frequency with which a learning area/subject is expected to be taught to all students, that is, whether it is expected all students will learn the subject in each year of schooling
- 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.

The Australian states and territories have different structural arrangements for organising and delivering curriculum. These differences and the way in which ACARA will address them are outlined below.

i. School starting age.

   While there is variation in the age of and requirement for commencement of schooling between states and territories, the Australian Curriculum will take Foundation Year (known in states and territories variously as Kindergarten, Pre-primary, Preparatory, Reception, Transition) as the first year of schooling and design curriculum for students who are between 5 and 6 years old in this first year.

ii. The placement of Year 7 in primary or secondary schooling.

   There is significant variation in the placement of Year 7 within curriculum and school arrangements. While most states and territories have Year 7 as the first year of secondary schooling and the rest have it as the last year of primary schooling, there is considerable variation in the ways that schools are organised, including separate primary and secondary schools, middle years structures and Year 10 to Year 12 school structures. The Australian Curriculum will be designed for Year 7 to be taught in a range of settings and not necessarily requiring specialist teachers and resources.

iii. The use of stages or phases of schooling to organise the curriculum or as organisers of schooling

   The Australian Curriculum will be organised by years or bands of years of schooling, with age-related developmental considerations being taken into account within this framework. This approach to curriculum design does not preclude schools and school authorities aggregating curriculum content across years to facilitate a stage of schooling delivery strategy or to facilitate composite or multi-age class arrangements.

iv. Commencement of senior secondary schooling

Some states and territories allow early commencement of senior school studies, based on curriculum documents designed for Year 11 and Year 12 students. The Australian Curriculum will be designed for Years F–10 and Senior Secondary Years. This does not preclude states and territories continuing to allow early commencement of senior secondary curriculum.

4.4 Inclusivity

The Australian Curriculum will contribute to achieving the goals of the Melbourne Declaration, including the promotion of equity and excellence in education. The curriculum must value and build on students' prior learning, experiences and goals. Examples used in the curriculum should reflect the diversity of knowledge, experience and cultural values of students. Particular consideration should be given to visible and positive ways of representing groups that might otherwise be vulnerable to exclusionary pressures.

Some of the variation among students in their level of development and progress can become the basis for inequities in their educational experiences. The Australian Curriculum is developed to ensure that curriculum content and achievement standards establish high expectations for all students. The curriculum provides flexibility for teachers to take into account the different rates at which students develop and a diverse range of learning and assessment needs. In developing curriculum for all Australian students, the Board will not accommodate these differences by setting different expectations for different groups, since that reinforces differences and creates inequitable outcomes.

Teachers understand the diversity in the students they teach and are responsible for organising learning opportunities to meet individual learning needs. Teachers, schools and school authorities have a primary role in dealing with these differences. For example, for students with intellectual disabilities, individual education plans are developed to determine which adjustments should be made to the curriculum to best meet the needs of the individual student.

As per current arrangements, teachers will refer to school authority policies, resources and practices designed to assist particular student cohorts as they plan for and teach the Australian Curriculum. These policies typically address support for:

- students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students learning English as an additional language or dialect
- students of non-English speaking background
- students who live in isolated communities
- students with a physical or intellectual disability.

In addition, issues of gender and levels of academic achievement need to be taken into account to ensure an inclusive curriculum.

The senior secondary Australian Curriculum will be designed with the needs of the full range of students in mind. Consideration will be given to making each senior secondary Australian Curriculum subject accessible to as many students as possible, acknowledging that the full suite of courses and pathways available in states and territories, across and within learning areas, will provide for a range of interests and capabilities. In some cases state/territory-developed courses and pathway options will continue to exist, further extending the opportunities available to students.

The Australian Curriculum promotes excellence and equity in education. The Australian Curriculum is based on the assumptions that each student can learn and that 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. Students in Australian classrooms have multiple, diverse, and changing needs that are shaped by individual learning histories and abilities as well as cultural, language backgrounds and socioeconomic factors.

ACARA is working with state and territory education authorities to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and will produce advice about using the curriculum to address the diversity of student learning.

Specific guidelines to assist writers address inclusivity will include questions, such as those that follow.

Language

- Does the curriculum acknowledge that students bring a diverse range of language resources and that these need to be recognised, used and extended?
- Has care been taken to ensure that language used is not exclusive and that terms selected are not negative?
- Is the student's language acknowledged as an important learning resource? For example, are students encouraged to explore concepts using their home language when appropriate?

Stereotypes

- Are any groups ascribed characteristics that are more negative or positive than other groups? In what context?
- Are connections made to a variety of skills, knowledge and careers in non-stereotyped ways?

Bias

- Is there evidence of bias in the language being used, such as different language being used to describe the same idea or experience for various groups, with pejorative connotations?
- Is a particular view or situation portrayed as 'natural' rather than one of many?

Context for learning

- Does the curriculum value and use what students bring to the class from their own background and life experiences?
- Does the content/context cater for different levels of ability?
- Does the content/context cater for different socioeconomic situations and/or geographic locations?
- Are examples appropriate to different learning contexts, learners and learning styles?

The curriculum writing process will involve advice and review of documents by advisory group members with expertise on inclusivity to ensure the appropriateness of curriculum content and expectations of achievement.

4.5 General capabilities

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* identifies essential skills for twenty-first century learners – in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), thinking, creativity, teamwork and communication. It describes individuals who can manage their own wellbeing, relate well to others, make informed decisions about their lives, become citizens who behave with ethical integrity, relate to and communicate across cultures, work for the common good and act with responsibility at local, regional and global levels. In the Australian Curriculum these skills are primarily addressed through the general capabilities.

General capabilities comprise an integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students develop and use in their learning across the curriculum. They are addressed through the learning areas and are identified wherever they are developed or applied in content descriptions. They are also identified where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning in content elaborations.

Curriculum documents show how the general capabilities are addressed in each learning area. Each capability will be represented in each learning area in ways appropriate to that area. For some they will be included because they need to be developed and applied in the particular learning area. For others they can be taught and learned by students in any learning area – their development will depend on teachers' choices of classroom activities. .

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 all 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 and 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.

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 the 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, lives, work and learning more effectively. The capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for and understanding of others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams and handling challenging situations constructively.

Ethical behaviour

Students develop capability in learning to behave ethically as they identify and investigate the nature of ethical concepts, values, character traits and principles, and understand how reasoning can assist ethical judgment. Ethical behaviour 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.

4.6 Cross-curriculum priorities

There are other cross-curriculum matters that can be thought of as priorities rather than capabilities. The Australian Curriculum, through development of curriculum documents for learning areas/subjects, will address three cross-curriculum priorities.

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 a globalised world. Students will gain personal and social benefits, be better equipped to make sense of the world in which they live and make an important contribution to building the social, intellectual and creative capital of our nation.

Accordingly, the Australian Curriculum must be both relevant to the lives of students and address the contemporary issues they face. With these considerations and the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* in mind, the curriculum gives special attention to these three priorities:

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures**, to ensure that all young Australians will be given the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, their significance for Australia and the impact these have had, and continue to have, on our world
- **Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia**, to reflect the importance of young people knowing about Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, because as they develop a better understanding of the countries and cultures of the Asia region, they will come to appreciate the economic, political and cultural interconnections that Australia has with the region
- **Sustainability**, to allow young people to develop an appreciation of the need for more sustainable patterns of living, and to build capacities for thinking, valuing and acting necessary to create a more sustainable future.

Cross-curriculum priorities are represented in all learning areas/subjects. They will have a strong but varying presence depending on their relevance to the learning areas. 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. At the commencement of the shaping process, the writers will determine which of the cross-curriculum priorities organising ideas are taken to be inherent to learning in the area and which ones could also be developed with an appropriate choice of activities by the teacher. These are then confirmed at the beginning of the writing process.

The content descriptions that support the knowledge, understanding and skills of the cross-curriculum priorities are tagged with icons. The tagging brings the need and opportunity to address the cross-curriculum priorities to the attention of teachers. Elaborations in the F–10 curriculum will provide further advice on how this can be done, or teachers can select the hyperlink which will provide links to more detailed information on each priority.

4.7 Assessment and reporting

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.

Reporting to parents will provide information about a student's actual achievement against the achievement standards. The use of Australian Curriculum achievement standards as a common reference point for reporting to parents will contribute to national consistency in reporting.

Individual school authorities will have specific assessment and reporting requirements that schools and/or teachers will need to meet.

Current Commonwealth 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).

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.

As the Australian Curriculum is being implemented, ACARA will work with the states and territories and the Australian Government to investigate ways to strengthen national consistency in reporting.

This section outlines the elements of the F–10 Australian Curriculum and provides guidelines for its development.

5.1 Rationale

In each learning area, the Australian Curriculum provides a rationale for the choice of curriculum content. This rationale makes clear to teachers and students why the chosen content is important for students and outlines the broad scope and sequence of learning to be expected from Foundation to Year 10. The rationale makes clear how certain choices were made — whether they were based on 'big ideas' essential to a deep understanding of a domain of knowledge; learning that is essential for further learning in a particular area; other important considerations such as the students' developing sense of personal identity; or Australia's geographical and historical context.

A rationale:

- will be no more than 200 words
- will be written for F–10.

5.2 Aims

The aims of the learning area will identify the major learning that students will be able to demonstrate as a result of being taught the curriculum.

The statement of aims for F–10:

- will comprise a small number (4-6) of statements for the learning area
- will be based on the draft aims in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: <learning area> documents. Agreement on the broad aims should be one of the first tasks for the writing team in consultation with the learning area advisory group.

5.3 Organisation of the <learning area> curriculum

This section will provide an overview of how the curriculum in the learning area will be organised for F–10. The curriculum across F–10 will be developed in a way that supports and coherently presents the continuity of learning, but which also provides for changing emphases across F–10.

The organisation section of the curriculum will include the following elements (acknowledging there may be additional ones for specific learning areas or subjects):

- Content structure: Describes the nature of the strands and their relationship; a summary of the major concepts; year level descriptions; content descriptions and a glossary.
- The nature of learners F–10: Provides advice across different year groupings on the nature of learners and the relevant curriculum.

Achievement standards: Generic description consistent with the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* paper.

- Diversity of learners: Includes generic text on students with disability and those learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D).
- General capabilities: Includes a combination of generic text and specific curriculum area text for each general capability, that is, a brief summary of the general capabilities that have been explicitly included in the content of the curriculum area.
- Cross-curriculum priorities: Includes a combination of generic text and specific curriculum area text for each cross-curriculum priority, that is, a brief summary of where and how each of the three priorities have been explicitly included in the content of the curriculum area.
- Links to other learning areas: Identifies substantive links to other Australian Curriculum learning areas to assist teachers to make connections in their planning for student learning.
- Implications for teaching and assessment: A brief overview of how the Australian Curriculum can accommodate particular approaches to teaching and assessment. Some of the text will be generic.

5.4 Curriculum content

Across the years of schooling F–10, curriculum content will be presented in a sequence that guides teaching and learning, designed to build depth of knowledge, skill and understanding. Curriculum content will be presented in the form of 'content descriptions'.

Curriculum content is primarily for use by schools and individual teachers although it also provides a reference for discussions with students, parents and the broader community.

Content descriptions

Content descriptions are statements that describe the knowledge, concepts, skills and processes which teachers are expected to teach. They will include the general capabilities, as appropriate, for each learning area. These statements will be linked to present a scope and sequence across years of schooling.

This approach will assist the development of fundamental concepts and skills that need to be revisited across a number of years of schooling. The intention is for students to develop both deeper understanding of concepts and their application in a learning area, and relationships between ideas in a learning area.

Content descriptions are:

- developed in accord with advice in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* <learning area> papers
- arranged by curriculum organisers (strands)

- written for each year or bands of years of schooling
- designed so that they can be covered comfortably in the indicative time
- written to facilitate rigorous, in-depth study, with an emphasis on depth rather than breadth
- developed to ensure that learning is appropriately ordered and that unnecessary repetition is avoided
- able to provide the basis for the learning described in the achievement standards
- written to follow an implicit stem 'students will be taught'
- written in plain English.

Content elaborations

The content elaborations may take the form of additional description or examples of contexts or of teaching points. They accompany the content descriptions to assist teachers to develop a common understanding about what is to be taught to students. They are not intended to be indicators of achievement or a set of complete or even comprehensive content points that all students need to be taught. They will be provided as support material only, not part of the Australian Curriculum to be implemented.

Content elaborations:

- provide further detail for teachers who may need this level of support
- illustrate and exemplify content descriptions with a diverse range of examples
- follow an implicit stem 'this may involve students' and commence with a verb in the present continuous tense, for example 'identifying', 'exploring', 'describing'
- are written in plain English.

In the digital version of the curriculum, there will be access to content elaborations and hyperlinks to other learning areas, support information and further exemplification.

5.5 Achievement standards

What are achievement standards?

- 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. This sequence provides teachers with a framework of growth and development in each of the learning areas.
- Achievement standards emphasise the depth of conceptual understanding and the sophistication of skills.
- Achievement standards will be accompanied by portfolios of annotated student work samples, as support material to illustrate the achievement standard.

How should they be viewed?

- The content descriptions and achievement standards are not independent — they should be read together.
- The achievement standard at each year level should be read as a whole (that is, the understanding and skills elements are read together).
- When viewing the sequence of achievement standards for a learning area, look at the broad development of conceptual understanding and skills (that is, read them holistically, not in an atomised way).

Writers will:

- draft the achievement standard statements concurrently with the writing of curriculum content, although work on achievement standards will be preceded by a draft scope and sequence of curriculum content
- take account of what is known from research about the progression of student learning in the different learning areas; be guided by analysis of state/territory and national student achievement data sets that provide empirical information on the sequence of learning of fundamental concepts, skills and understanding in the learning area and the threshold points at which students typically demonstrate achievement of these concepts, skills and understandings
- identify, as the focus of achievement standards, the key concepts, skills and understanding that describe a sequence of fundamental learning across the years of schooling
- ensure that specific content knowledge is not unnecessarily repeated in achievement standards and that achievement standards clearly state what students are expected to be able to do having been taught the curriculum content
- have access[1] to graded student work samples in key areas to guide and inform their writing of achievement standards and to enable them to identify areas for which further work samples might need to be collected.

Curriculum writers will consider the following when writing achievement standards:

- Year by year content requires year by year standards. For learning areas where the content of some strands is described on a two-year basis (and the rest on a year by year basis), standards should be written accordingly.
- Attention needs to be paid to ensuring that the quality of achievement is appropriately captured in the descriptions. One important test of this will occur when viewing the standards across a number of year levels.
- Achievement standards are to emphasise skills and understandings in two separate paragraphs. In describing understandings include an active component, that is, the 'how' not just the 'what'.

[1] This access will need to be negotiated with relevant curriculum authorities.

- Content descriptions should not be repeated in the achievement standard — the assumption is that the achievement standard is read in the context and with the knowledge of what is to be taught that year.
- Consider for each description ‘how you would know’, that is, how it can be represented effectively in evidence.
- In writing achievement standards,
  - ✓ begin, ‘By the end of Year ...’
  - ✓ avoid the use of examples
  - ✓ use direct language and remove unnecessary words like ‘is able to’
  - ✓ do not use dot points — this would not be consistent with their summative purpose and intended use
  - ✓ do not use headings/titles — this provides a more holistic sense of the performance.

6.1 Background

The design specifications for the senior secondary Australian Curriculum build on:

a) the *Senior Secondary Years Position Paper* that was subject to national consultation in the last quarter of 2009

b) discussion on senior secondary curriculum in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* v3.0, which included reference to overall characteristics of the senior secondary Australian Curriculum.

6.2 Key terms

The senior secondary Australian Curriculum will specify content and achievement standards for a senior secondary subject.

a) **Learning areas** are broad areas of the curriculum listed in the Melbourne Declaration, including English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and social sciences, the Arts, Languages, Health and physical education, and Technologies.

b) A **subject** is a discrete area of study that is part of a learning area. For example, History is a subject within the learning area of Humanities and social sciences. There may be one or more subjects in a single learning area.

c) The senior secondary Australian Curriculum for each subject will be organised into **units**. A unit is a component of content that can be feasibly taught in about half a 'school year' (50-60 hours).

d) **Content** refers to the knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught and learned within a given subject.

e) **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.

f) A **course** sets out the requirements for the implementation of a senior secondary Australian Curriculum subject. It will include specifications for content, achievement standards, assessment and certification.

g) A **program of learning** is what a school provides to implement the course for a subject. It meets requirements for content, scope and sequence set out in the approved course. Students follow programs of learning in schools as part of their senior secondary studies.

6.3 Structure

The senior secondary Australian Curriculum for each subject will be organised into **four units**. The last two units will be developmentally more challenging than the first two units.

Each unit will be designed to be taught in about half a 'school year' (approximately 50–60 hours duration including assessment and examinations) of senior secondary studies.

Each unit begins with a short description that outlines the purpose and nature of the unit, that is, provides a brief overview of the broad content or focus of the unit.

Senior secondary curriculum will include assumptions about prior learning. These assumptions will be implicit in the course content. Additional information about assumed prior learning may be provided as appropriate.

Senior secondary units will be designed so that students may study them singly, in pairs (that is, year-long), or study all four units.

The senior secondary Australian Curriculum for each subject will be designed to be accessible to as many students as possible. During development, any limitations on accessibility will be explicitly identified and justified in terms of the nature of the subject as senior secondary curriculum.

State and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities will determine permitted entry and exit points and credit for completed study, in line with their certification requirements.

The specifications developed by ACARA for each subject in the senior secondary Australian Curriculum will include the following key elements:

- Rationale and Aims
- Learning outcomes
- Content descriptions
- Achievement standards.

6.4 Rationale

The rationale will

- describe the nature of the subject in general terms and provide an outline of how learning in this course relates to the contemporary world and current practice
- explain 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
- be consistent with the F–10 learning area rationale
- be approximately 200 words.

6.5 Aims

The aims will present high-level statements of the major purpose of the subject and the intended developments in student learning.

The aims will:

- contain a small number of statements for the subject (approximately 4–6)
- apply across the four units of the subject
- be consistent with the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* paper for the learning area.

6.6 Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes will describe in broad terms what a student is expected to have learned as a result of studying the specified content. Learning outcomes will describe the major dimensions of content, namely the knowledge, understanding and skills required by the subject. Four to six learning outcomes will be written for each unit; some will focus on knowledge and understanding and some on skills.

6.7 Content descriptions

Content descriptions will state the specific subject-based knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught and learned.

Content descriptions will be written for each unit. Together with learning outcomes and levels of achievement, they will provide sufficient detail for:

a) teachers and students to know what is expected to be taught and learned

b) state and territory authorities to set assessment and certification requirements.

Content descriptions will be organised so that it is clear which content is common and which is elective.

Content descriptions will incorporate Australian Curriculum general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities that naturally align with the subject.

Content descriptions:

- consist of a lead statement about conceptual focus, with further detail exemplified by a series of sub-points where necessary to describe the breadth and depth of the knowledge, understanding and skills
- describe knowledge and understanding without the use of active verbs
- describe skills using active verbs
- use examples within the description to elaborate content as necessary.

6.8 Achievement standards

Achievement standards will be 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 will be categorised into 'knowledge and understanding' and 'skills'.

The achievement standards will be written as five levels of achievement[2] for each pair of units: units 1 and 2, and units 3 and 4. Each will broadly describe what students are able to do, including for the lowest level where achievement will be described positively, albeit as very limited achievement.

The achievement standards will be designed and written:

a) to provide an ordered sequence of descriptions of the achievement evident within the population of students completing a pair of units

b) to describe the qualities typical in the knowledge, understanding and skill displayed by students at five levels

c) to be challenging and reflective of the population of students typically taking that subject.

Achievement standards will not be written to be of direct equivalence across subjects. The highest level of achievement in one subject will describe the characteristics of outstanding achievement in that subject — it will not describe outstanding achievement in another subject.

Noting that state and territory authorities have their own assessment and reporting policies and processes, the primary role of achievement standards will be to exemplify the range of performance for a given subject. The achievement standards will be subject to review and refinement as state and territory authorities work to incorporate the national content and achievement standards into courses for use in their state or territory.

State and territory assessment and certification authorities will determine assessment arrangements and associated processes for assigning students to levels and for generating other assessment information, including subject scores.

[2] For certification purposes, states and territories may include an additional level to describe unsatisfactory or incomplete performance.

6.9 Other information

The specifications developed by ACARA for each subject in the senior secondary Australian Curriculum will also include:

- an **organisation** section which will include:
  - a description of each of the subjects in the learning area
  - an outline of the overall senior secondary curriculum structure and design specifications
  - unit descriptions (about the purpose of each unit in relation to the overall rationale and aims), and the connection between the units
  - an outline of strands or content organisers and the relationships between them
  - the nature and rationale for the achievement standards structure
  - the connections between the F–10 Australian Curriculum and the senior secondary curriculum in the learning area, including any assumptions about prior learning
  - generic text about the general capabilities, with subject-specific text about those capabilities represented strongly
  - generic text about the cross-curriculum priorities, with subject-specific text about those priorities represented strongly;
- a **glossary** of key terms used in the subject; subject specific terms that are considered essential for students to know and be able to use are defined and referenced to acknowledged sources.