

A world-class curriculum for the 21st century

What is a world-class curriculum?

A world-class curriculum is one that inspires and challenges all learners and prepares them for the future. In the 21st century, this means a world-class curriculum will:

- equip young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities to take advantage of opportunity and face future challenges with confidence
- reflect a strong evidence base, drawing on current national and international research about student learning and best practice in curriculum design;
- be the product of a highly consultative development process
- provide the curriculum basis for schools to support excellence and equity for all students
- enable ready and flexible access to the curriculum for schools, teachers, students, parents and the broader community.

The approach taken to organise the school curriculum by learning areas provides a foundation of learning in schools designed to ensure students develop the knowledge and understanding on which the major disciplines are based.

However, 21st century learning does not fit neatly into a curriculum solely organised by learning areas. Increasingly, in a world where knowledge itself is constantly growing and evolving, students need to develop a set of 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. The Australian Curriculum focuses on the development of general capabilities in addition to discipline-based learning areas.

Is the Australian Curriculum high quality?

The commitment and resourcing by all Australian governments to design a world-class Australian Curriculum has allowed some of the best talent across the nation – teachers, academics and curriculum experts – to be involved in developing the Australian Curriculum for each learning area.

The current high quality curriculum in states and territories, as well as that of leading nations, has been considered during the development of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum for each learning area has been mapped against the curricula of high performing nations. This mapping against the curriculum of states and territories and leading nations provides an assurance that the Australian Curriculum is indeed world-class.

How does the Australian Curriculum equip all young people for the future?

The Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history, and for subsequent learning areas, is organised with explicit descriptions of what is to be taught to students and what is expected in terms of the quality of learning as they progress through schooling from Foundation to Year 12.

The Australian Curriculum identifies essential content that all students should be taught and is written so that there is time to pursue deep learning of that content. It also allows flexibility for schools and teachers to include local and topical content.

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The Australian Curriculum is based on the assumptions that each student can learn and the needs of every student are important. Achievement standards have been set to ensure they are challenging and contribute to all students receiving a quality education. The curriculum enables high expectations to be set for each student as teachers account for current levels of learning and the different rates at which students learn.

The Australian Curriculum pays explicit attention to how seven general capabilities and three cross-curriculum priorities contribute to, and can be developed through, teaching in each learning area.

The seven general capabilities are:

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

The three cross-curriculum priorities are:

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

By attending to the learning areas and subjects, the general capabilities and the cross curriculum priorities and by focusing on essential learning and not overcrowding the curriculum, the Australian Curriculum helps prepare all young Australians to become valued members of the community.

What does world-class access to the curriculum look like?

Previous curricula have been published in hard copy form, and typically with separate booklets for each learning area. This has tended to reinforce notions of a static, one-dimensional curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum is published online via the website www.australiancurriculum.edu.au to enable all Australians to see what is to be taught in schools across the nation.

In addition, an online publication means that:

- teachers have flexibility in how they view and organise the curriculum
- relevant resources can be tagged to the curriculum and made readily accessible in a digital form
- ongoing sharing of information and resources between teachers across the country can more readily occur
- the curriculum can remain dynamic and responsive (in a managed way) both to feedback from users and also to contemporary developments and research.

To view the Australian Curriculum go to www.australiancurriculum.edu.au