

Review of the Australian Curriculum:

**A statement by the
Australian Curriculum,
Assessment and Reporting
Authority**

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Overview

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) leads national collaboration to produce the Foundation – Year 12 Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum can be viewed at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

A curriculum for all young Australians

The Australian Curriculum sets consistent high standards for what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling. It prepares Australia's next generation for the future and lays the building blocks for generations to come. It facilitates national collaboration to develop and share high quality resources and teaching practices.

A commitment to national collaboration

ACARA draws on the best national talent and expertise to draft the curriculum. Each step in the development process involves extensive consultation with teachers, principals, state and territory education authorities, professional education associations, business, industry, community groups, the general public and all governments in a transparent process to ensure a balanced, rigorous curriculum is developed. ACARA considered over 16 800 submissions in developing the curriculum now available on the Australian Curriculum website.

Delivering on the vision

Across Foundation – Year 12, 30 subjects across eight learning areas have been developed and published on the Australian Curriculum website. All states and territories have commenced implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum focuses on learning area content and achievement standards that describe what students will learn and teachers will teach. It also gives attention to seven general capabilities that are important for life and work in the 21st century and to three issues identified in the *Melbourne Declaration* as needing more attention than they have received in curricula to date. The general capabilities and the cross-curriculum priorities are not added as additional subjects. They are dealt with, where relevant, through the learning area content on which the curriculum is built.

WHO IS ACARA?

ACARA was established under Commonwealth legislation as an independent inter-jurisdictional authority. It is directed by and reports to the council of Commonwealth, state and territory ministers for education (currently the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, or SCSEEC). ACARA is governed by a board nominated by the education ministers as well as Catholic and independent national peak bodies.

ACARA's mission is to improve the learning of all young Australians through world-class school curriculum, assessment and reporting. These three elements are inextricably linked and reflect the processes of planning, teaching, assessing and reporting that is at the heart of quality teaching.

Find out more about us at the [ACARA website](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au).

A work in progress

ACARA is continuing to develop subjects within the Australian Curriculum, including the languages and work studies curricula. ACARA is also developing materials to support teachers as the curriculum is being implemented. For example, in 2014 ACARA is working with states and territories and primary principals to support primary school implementation of the whole Australian Curriculum.

Enhancing the Australian Curriculum

As a part of agreed monitoring and evaluation processes, ACARA is gathering information about the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum and identifying ways in which the curriculum could be improved over time. These include ensuring the curriculum continues to meet the needs of students in a changing world, is practical for teachers across Australia, reflects best practice nationally and internationally, and requires comparable achievements to those of other high-performing nations. ACARA uses this information to prepare a future work plan for consideration by all education ministers.

Development of the Australian Curriculum

1 A curriculum for all young Australians: the purpose and potential of the Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum has been designed to set expectations for what all young Australians should learn as they progress through school, regardless of where they live. The rationale for introducing an Australian Curriculum centres on improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system. The Council of Australian Governments established the commitment to an Australian Curriculum, framed in terms defined by the council of all education ministers (then the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs) in their [2008 Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians](#).

It is well-accepted that quality teaching makes the most significant contribution to student learning. A national curriculum sets common, shared expectations and facilitates national collaboration and sharing of high-quality practice and resources. The development of the Australian Curriculum is resulting in quality resources for teaching and learning being developed by educational, cultural and community organisations, and commercial publishers for use in classrooms across Australia.

The provision of a national curriculum underpins the work of Education Services Australia and its important services for schools such as Scootle, which provides teachers with access to a national digital resource collection. A common and agreed national curriculum also supports coherent national approaches to professional standards and teacher quality, through the work of other national authorities such as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

Over time, the Australian Curriculum will contribute to increasing Australia's international competitiveness in education by having set expectations for Australian students that are comparable with those of the highest performing nations. As areas for further national improvement are identified through international and national measures of student learning, adjustments to the Australian Curriculum will enable collaborative national responses.

The Australian Curriculum has drawn on national expertise and built on the diverse curriculum development and implementation experiences of states and territories. As a national endeavour, it offers economies of scale and a substantial reduction in the duplication of time, effort and resources. Over time, there is the potential for costs to be reduced as the curriculum development work undertaken by each state and territory is supplemented by a national process.

2 A commitment to national collaboration: the development process for the Australian Curriculum

From the outset, ACARA has engaged in extensive national consultation, drawing on talent across the country to access the best available advice and writing expertise, providing opportunities for broad public consultation, seeking targeted review by international experts, reviewing thousands of responses and maintaining transparency around decision making for all stakeholders.

Guiding development: *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*

In 2009, following public consultation, [The Shape of the Australian Curriculum](#) was published. This document was approved by the council of Commonwealth and state and territory education ministers to guide the development of the Australian Curriculum. The paper reflected the position adopted by ministers collectively in their [Melbourne Declaration](#) of 2008. In this declaration,

ministers committed to ‘supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens’ and to promoting equity and excellence in education. The Declaration proposed that the Australian Curriculum (and state and territory or local curricula) would 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 (p. 13).

The *Melbourne Declaration* described a curriculum with the following learning areas:

- English
- mathematics
- sciences (including physics, chemistry, biology)
- humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
- the arts (performing and visual)
- languages (especially Asian languages)
- health and physical education
- information and communication technology, and design and technology (p. 14).

The *Melbourne Declaration* also identified three key areas that need to be addressed for all young Australians to be active and informed citizens. These are broadly identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia; and sustainability (p. 9).

The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* supports this intent by describing a three-dimensional curriculum that recognises the central importance of knowledge, understanding and skills of learning areas, and provides for the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities to be covered, where relevant, within the learning areas. The paper emphasises the importance of rigorous, in-depth study, and the preference for depth over breadth wherever a choice needs to be made. Currently, this paper is in Version 4, reflecting the ongoing consultation and discussion about the shape of the Australian Curriculum as a whole.

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum clearly established the agreed roles of ACARA and other school authorities in developing and implementing the curriculum. It was agreed that jurisdictions, systems and schools should be able to implement the Australian Curriculum in ways that value teachers’ professional knowledge, reflect local contexts and take into account students’ family, cultural and community backgrounds. As the Australian Curriculum is implemented, it is school authorities that make decisions about the allocation of time for the learning areas and resources to support its implementation, and schools and teachers that determine pedagogical and other delivery considerations.

Drawing on diverse voices to develop the Foundation – Year 12 curriculum

Guided by the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* paper, ACARA consulted on and published two further documents to guide the Foundation – Year 12 curriculum development: the [Curriculum Development Process v6.0](#) and the [Curriculum Design Paper v3.1](#). The curriculum development

process describes the core actions and accountabilities at the four stages of curriculum shaping, curriculum writing, implementation, and curriculum monitoring and evaluation. The curriculum design paper provides a detailed description of each curriculum component and related design specifications.

ACARA has undertaken a process of curriculum development that:

- was based on agreed curriculum design principles
- involved high-level curriculum expertise nationwide
- provided opportunities for national consultation
- analysed and responded to consultation feedback
- established achievable timelines with available resources
- ensured high-quality curriculum documents.

The curriculum shaping phase for each learning area or subject involved the development of a broad outline of the Foundation – Year 12 curriculum. This shape paper provided direction on the purpose, structure and organisation of the curriculum. It was used to guide the work of the writers and advisory groups, to inform decisions about what content should be retained where content overload was an issue, and as a reference for judging the quality of the final curriculum. A lead writer, advised by discipline experts and school-based expert teachers with skills in the discipline, developed the shape paper. In the arts, technologies, and economics and business, the lead writer's duties were shared to ensure coverage of the area. These appointments were made on the basis of the esteem in which the individuals were held in the community, their professional networks and their expertise in the learning area.

The curriculum writing phase involved the development of the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards for a particular learning area. This phase included the validation of the achievement standards and culminated in publication of the curriculum on the Australian Curriculum website. In the writing phase for each learning area, ACARA established expert writing and advisory groups, mentored by the lead writer. These groups were selected to bring breadth and depth to the curriculum development. They included representatives from schools, teacher professional associations, industry groups and universities. The appointments were approved by the ACARA Board and group membership lists were published through the ACARA Annual Report and the ACARA website.

The advisory groups played a key role in ensuring that the curriculum was developed with reference to contemporary research in curriculum design and teaching and learning, and was of practical use within diverse school environments. The advisory groups also considered findings from independent work commissioned by ACARA, such as national and international benchmarking reports, and made recommendations at each stage of the curriculum development process. Specific advice from national and international subject matter experts outside the group was also sought on a needs basis.

The curriculum shaping and writing phases typically took between two and three years.

[Engaging in broad consultation to ensure a balanced, rigorous curriculum](#)

Over the course of its curriculum development to date, ACARA received over 16 800 submissions from individuals, groups and organisations (details are provided in the Learning Area Consultation Data 2008–2013 overview, available on the [ACARA website](#)). ACARA provided draft materials for public feedback via the Australian Curriculum website consultation portal at both the shaping and

writing phases. Trends across submissions were analysed and each submission was individually reviewed to assess the strength of its argument and its underpinning evidence base.

There were, not surprisingly, varied and conflicting views in the submissions. The advisory groups played a key role in proposing how to achieve a balanced, rigorous curriculum. They considered issues raised and suggested appropriate curriculum revision in line with the key criteria listed below. Where conflicting advice was received, the advisory group made decisions based on the source of the advice (giving more weight to submissions on behalf of organisations, particularly state and territory curriculum authorities) and the underpinning national and international research and evidence base. Consultation reports and consequent actions were discussed with national panels of state and territory curriculum experts and provided to the ACARA Board as the basis for further curriculum revision. Consultation reports were published on the [Consultation page](#) of the ACARA website.

ACARA used specific criteria to frame evaluation of the draft curriculum at each stage of the curriculum development process and to seek feedback on the extent to which its curriculum met these criteria (Box 1).

Box 1: Curriculum quality criteria:

- The curriculum is clear about what is to be taught across the years or bands of schooling and the quality of learning expected of students as they progress through school.
- The curriculum is flexible enough that it:
 - can accommodate the reality of student, teacher and school diversity
 - has high expectations and standards that are challenging yet realistic.
- The curriculum specifies what all young Australians:
 - should learn as they progress through schooling
 - can be taught well within the overall teaching time and with the resources available to teachers and students.
- The curriculum is concise and expressed in plain language, while preserving a complexity appropriate for professional practitioners, and is consistent in terms of language and broad structure.
- The curriculum is established on a strong evidence base, including the implications of the curriculum for learning, pedagogy and what works in professional practice, and has been benchmarked against international curricula. (*Curriculum Development Process*, p. 8).

Where there was significant and ongoing variation in the advice received, ACARA endeavoured to make the best decision based on the advice and evidence base available, but flagged these matters for monitoring during the first few years of implementation.

[A final decision on publication requires national approval](#)

The ACARA Board makes recommendations to the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) and the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC). The membership of AEEYSOC includes the Director-Generals/Secretaries/Chief Executives for school education and early childhood education and care

in Australia and SCSEEC includes all Commonwealth and state and territory education ministers. The final decision to endorse a curriculum rests with SCSEEC not ACARA.

Implementation timelines are locally determined

Following the endorsement of a curriculum, state and territory curriculum and school authorities determine timelines for implementation, taking into account the needs of their systems, schools and teachers. State and territory curriculum and school authorities present the curriculum to teachers in ways appropriate to their context, and are responsible for providing teaching and learning and assessment advice. An overview of the implementation timelines adopted by each state and territory jurisdiction is provided on the [ACARA website](#).

Monitoring and evaluation processes are ongoing

Monitoring and evaluation is the final phase of curriculum development and renewal. In 2013 the processes for monitoring and evaluating the Australian Curriculum were approved by the ACARA Board and noted by SCSEEC. Monitoring involves the collection in a systematic manner of feedback and data on the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum and the provision annually of a monitoring report to the ACARA Board to determine if any issues warrant evaluation. This approach balances the importance to schools of curriculum stability with the benefits of a dynamic and up-to-date curriculum.

ACARA is commencing monitoring in 2014. The agreed curriculum monitoring and evaluation processes are available on the [ACARA website](#).

3 Delivering on the vision: the Australian Curriculum in 2014

ACARA is on track to deliver the full set of requested Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum in 2014, with final development work underway for different languages and a work studies curriculum. Requested senior secondary curricula have also been delivered.

Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum is described as a three-dimensional curriculum that recognises the central importance of knowledge, understanding and skills of learning areas, and provides for the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities to be covered, where relevant, within the learning areas.

Learning areas and subjects

The following fifteen Australian Curriculum subjects are published online at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

Learning areas	Subjects	Endorsement by the council of federal, state and territory education ministers
English	English	Curriculum endorsed in December 2010; achievement standards endorsed in 2011.
mathematics	mathematics	
science	science	
humanities and social sciences	history	
	geography	Endorsed in May 2013.

	economics and business	Awaiting final endorsement. Noted in November 2013 and agreed that curriculum could be made available for state and territory use, with decisions about use to be taken by relevant authorities in each state and territory.
	civics and citizenship	
the arts	dance	Endorsed in July 2013, subject to further consultation with Western Australia.
	drama	
	media arts	
	music	
	visual arts	
technologies	design and technologies	Awaiting final endorsement. Noted November 2013 and agreed that curriculum could be made available for state and territory use, with decisions about use to be taken by relevant authorities in each state and territory.
	digital technologies	
health and physical education	health and physical education	

As described in the [Curriculum Design Paper v3.1](#), each learning area or subject includes a rationale, aims, information about its organisation, content descriptions and elaborations, achievement standards, year or band descriptions and a glossary. Portfolios of student work samples that illustrate achievement relative to the achievement standard are provided subsequent to the publication of the curriculum.

The content descriptions and achievement standards, written for each year or band of years, are the mandated components of the Australian Curriculum. Together they represent the content and performance standards of the Australian Curriculum – the knowledge, understanding and skills all young Australians are expected to learn and teachers are expected to teach.

Other information provided in the curriculum, such as content elaborations, is advice that can be considered by teachers. Content elaborations were developed in response to requests by some respondents for more detail to be provided. They offer some ideas about how content might be covered.

General capabilities

Increasingly, in a world where knowledge itself is constantly growing and evolving, students need to develop knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that apply across subject-based content and equip students to be lifelong learners able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world. Within Australia, business and industry groups have long called for such capabilities to be developed in school education. In the Australian Curriculum, these are called general capabilities and include literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding, and intercultural understanding.

In the Australian Curriculum, the general capabilities are addressed through the content of the learning areas and are identified where they are developed or applied in the content descriptions. They are also identified where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to the student learning via the optional content elaborations, provided to give teachers ideas about how they might

teach the content. Learning continua have been developed for each capability to describe the relevant knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions at particular points of schooling.

Cross-curriculum priorities

The Melbourne Declaration identified 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 the cross-curriculum priorities that provide students with the tools and language to engage with and better understand their world. There are three cross-curriculum priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia; and sustainability. A set of organising ideas that reflect the essential knowledge, understanding and skills has been developed for each cross-curriculum priority.

The priorities are not separate subjects in themselves and are only addressed in and through learning areas where appropriate. For example, there are no content descriptions in the mathematics curriculum that make reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The mathematics curriculum is clearly and unambiguously about the discipline of mathematics. However, connections are suggested in some of the content elaborations. For example, in Year 10 statistics, when students are learning how to compare distributions in different datasets, one elaboration suggests that teachers consider using data on the population for Australia as a whole and data on the population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia.

Student diversity

Materials have been developed to assist teachers to use the Australian Curriculum to develop teaching and learning programs that build on students’ interests, strengths, goals and learning needs. These address the cognitive, affective, physical, social and aesthetic needs of all students, inclusive of students with disability gifted and talented students, and students for whom English is an additional language or dialect.

Implementation timelines

The Australian Curriculum for F–10 English, mathematics, science and history has been steadily introduced across states and territories since 2011. An overview of the F–10 implementation timelines adopted by each state and territory jurisdiction is provided on the [ACARA website](#). In 2014 all state and territory curriculum and school authorities are implementing the curriculum and have developed a suite of local materials and resources to support teachers to teach and assess the curriculum within the state or territory context.

Senior secondary Australian Curriculum

The following fifteen senior secondary Australian Curriculum subjects are published online at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

Learning areas	Subjects	Endorsement by the council of federal, state and territory education ministers
English	English	Endorsed in December 2012.
	essential English	
	literature	
	English as an additional language or dialect	

mathematics	essential mathematics	Endorsed in December 2012.	
	general mathematics		
	mathematical methods		
	specialist mathematics		
science	biology		
	chemistry		
	Earth and environmental science		
	physics		
humanities and social sciences	ancient history		Endorsed in July 2013.
	modern history		
	geography		

Implementation timelines

In 2014 state and territory curriculum authorities are at various points in planning for the integration of senior secondary curriculum Australian Curriculum as the agreed and common basis for development of state and territory senior secondary courses. An overview of state and territory senior secondary integration plans is available on the [ACARA website](#).

4 The Australian Curriculum: a work in progress

ACARA's workplan is determined by the council of Commonwealth and state and territory education ministers. ACARA is currently undertaking the following Australian Curriculum work.

Developing further Australian Curricula

Languages

ACARA is finalising development of the Foundation – Year 10 languages curriculum. In April 2014, ACARA will forward curricula for Chinese, French, Indonesian and Italian languages to the council of all education ministers for their consideration. It is anticipated that the Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages, and curricula for Japanese, Korean, German, Modern Greek, Spanish, Vietnamese and Arabic languages will be provided to the ministerial council for consideration during 2014, with the publication of these languages curriculum planned to have taken place by the last quarter of 2014.

Work studies and the National Trade Cadetship

ACARA is currently working on revisions to the curriculum for work studies Years 9–10 in response to consultation feedback. The revised curriculum will be presented to the council of all education ministers in 2014, with the publication of the curriculum planned to occur later in the year.

The National Trade Cadetship Years 11–12 curriculum is in the shaping phase. Following approval by the ACARA Board, the draft shape paper is scheduled to be made available for public feedback from May 2014.

Senior secondary

In 2014 ACARA will continue to work with state and territory curriculum authorities to monitor and report to SCSEEC on the progress of each state and territory in the integration of the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards into courses and the implementation of these new courses. In response to concerns raised by the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities, ACARA will develop and undertake a process to improve the senior secondary Australian Curriculum achievement standards. ACARA is also reviewing the strategy and processes for the further development of the senior secondary Australian Curriculum and will develop agreed processes, options and timelines for additional senior secondary Australian Curriculum subjects.

Work sample portfolios

Annotated portfolios of student work samples are provided to assist teachers to make judgements about the quality of student learning in relation to the achievement standards. Enhanced work sample portfolios for English, mathematics, science and history will soon be made available on the Australian Curriculum website. New portfolios of student work are being developed for the arts, civics and citizenship, economics and business, health and physical education, and technologies. These portfolios will become available over 2014 and 2015. Work sample portfolios are developed in collaboration with teachers and schools across Australia.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is the final phase in Australian Curriculum development process. The monitoring and evaluation process for the Australian Curriculum was approved in 2013 and implementation is underway in 2014. The process recognises the importance of partnership between ACARA and the state and territory curriculum and school authorities that are responsible for school implementation of the curriculum. ACARA is focused on monitoring the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum and not its implementation. Discussions to date have highlighted the need for monitoring of the following:

- the amount of content across the whole curriculum, and at particular year levels or stages of schooling such as in the primary years
- the appropriateness of the approach taken to the cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities
- the level of challenge in the curriculum content and achievement standards, especially with reference to new content within learning areas
- the inclusiveness of the curriculum for students with diverse needs and backgrounds.

The monitoring and evaluation process has been designed to be responsive to needs for change whilst providing curriculum stability for schools, the community and education authorities.

Monitoring occurs from the point of curriculum publication, enabling feedback and data on the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum to be collected in a systematic manner. Annually the ACARA Board will review a monitoring report to determine if any issues warrant evaluation. The first monitoring report will be provided to the Board in the second half of 2014.

Exploring strategies to support primary teachers

Primary schools have reported that there are manageability issues associated with implementing the Australian Curriculum across all learning areas. These issues vary across schools and are not solely related to volume of content. Some of these issues relate to familiarity with new content and terminology, change management processes, and the availability of support materials and resources.

ACARA is working with states and territories to identify and implement actions to support primary schools in their implementation of the whole Australian Curriculum. These strategies include illustrations of how school leaders in different primary schools are managing the curriculum in their schools and enhancements to the Australian Curriculum website to facilitate planning in and across the curriculum. ACARA is also mapping the curriculum to highlight links across the curriculum and where content connections can be made in and between the learning areas such as in the arts and between the subjects that comprise the humanities and social sciences learning area.

Strengthening the general capabilities

ACARA will enhance the identification of general capabilities within each of the subjects of the Australian Curriculum, including a mapping of their coverage across the whole curriculum. This will inform a review of the learning continua for the general capabilities and their alignment with the learning area curricula. It will also enable ACARA to strengthen the alignment and representation of the general capabilities across the curriculum, where appropriate.

Alignment with the National Assessment Program

ACARA is working to align the National Assessment Program (NAP) and the Australian Curriculum. This will involve the development of an assessment framework for the NAP – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), further development of the NAP sample testing and using NAP data to inform curriculum review.

Working with stakeholders to support implementation of new content

ACARA is leading or contributing to a number of collaborative projects designed to support teachers' understanding of new content within learning areas and use of teaching resources. Examples of these projects include:

- a digital technologies project aimed at supporting the professional learning for teachers in aspects of the technologies curriculum
- national projects such as the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership's science and mathematics illustrations.

5 Enhancing the Australian Curriculum: areas for further development

In order to meet the educational needs of Australia, the school curriculum must evolve over time. ACARA's annual monitoring and evaluation processes consider the needs of Australian students and teachers, new data and international trends in curriculum, and developments in teaching and learning of specific subjects. In addition, as the Australian Curriculum is implemented across Australia, ACARA is gathering information about the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum and how the curriculum could be strengthened. The specific issues that follow have been identified through discussions with key stakeholders to date and will be further monitored as the curriculum is implemented.

Strengthening achievement standards

The achievement standards are critical in guiding expectations about student achievement and designing teaching and learning programs that ensure each student is progressing in their learning. As the Australian Curriculum is implemented, ACARA is gathering evidence about student achievement relative to the achievement standards and curriculum content. Further evidence will be available when the National Assessment Program is aligned to the Australian Curriculum and the curriculum has been implemented over a sufficient period of time that trends in international tests

can be used to reflect on the influence of the curriculum on student learning and achievement. This growing evidence can form the basis for further validation of the achievement standards to ensure that expectations of students are not only appropriately challenging but also achievable.

Strengthening connections across the whole curriculum

The Australian Curriculum was written in stages (as per the program requested of ACARA) and has been carefully crafted to ensure that the content descriptions and achievement standards form a clear scope and sequence within a learning area. As the curriculum is being implemented, the monitoring and evaluation process will provide the opportunity to strengthen alignment of content across the whole curriculum to ensure a clear scope and sequence of knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum.

Increasing the functionality and usability of the Australian Curriculum website

The Australian Curriculum website makes the curriculum available to teachers and the community. The website currently enables teachers to use filtering and various views to support planning for implementation. Feedback from teachers and state and territory education authorities indicates support for enhancing the capacity of teachers and schools to view and explore connections between curriculum content across subjects and years of learning. This could include developing an Australian Curriculum planning tool, identifying connections across the curriculum (such as learning about engineering; food and fibre production; and the development of inquiry skills) and providing illustrations of how teachers are using the components of the curriculum to improve student learning.

Improving content elaborations

Content elaborations were initially written as illustrations to help guide teacher understanding of the intent of the content descriptions, and to suggest possible ways a teacher might integrate the cross-curriculum priorities, should this be appropriate in their context. Since publication of Foundation to Year 10 English, mathematics, science and history in 2010, significant work has been done on the three-dimensional nature of the curriculum, and the ways in which the cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities are described within the curriculum. As a result, there is room for improvement in the alignment of the content elaborations to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. In addition, as more teachers implement the Australian Curriculum there are clearer indicators about the ways in which these elaborations can be written to support teachers in the classroom, and the types of elaborations required.

Conclusion

Over the past five years, ACARA has published 30 subjects across Foundation – Year 12, and further work is underway to finalise the curriculum for languages and work studies and the National Trade Cadetship. ACARA is working with state and territory education and school authorities to support implementation of the curriculum, particularly for primary schools and for new content areas. This curriculum development work represents the significant investment of a wide range of experts and stakeholders across Australia.

The Australian Curriculum will evolve over time. ACARA has begun a monitoring and evaluation process to inform curriculum revision, and has identified a number of areas for further development based on the feedback from systems, schools and teachers currently implementing the curriculum.

Any curriculum development occurs in contested territory, precisely because of its importance to the current generation and generations to come. While change will always be debated, what is imperative is that any revisions to the curriculum are evidence-based and focused on achieving the best possible education outcomes for Australian students.