



The Shape of the Australian Curriculum

Version 2.0



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Amendment history

Date	Version	Comment
May 2009	1.0	Approved by the Interim National Curriculum Board in May 2009 to guide the development of the first phase of the Australian Curriculum (English, mathematics, science and history).
October 2010	2.0	<p>Updated to support implementation of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history, to provide the context for the next stage of development of the Foundation to Year 12 curriculum and to promote ongoing discussion about the shape of the Australian Curriculum as a whole.</p> <p>Approved for publication by the ACARA Board 26 October 2010 and endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs on 8 December 2010.</p>

1. Purpose

1. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum v2.0* provides the policy background to support implementation of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history. It also provides the context for the next stage of development of the Foundation to Year 12 curriculum and will promote ongoing discussion about the shape of the Australian Curriculum as a whole — what is desired and how this differs from current practice in states and territories.
2. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (May 2009) was written to guide the development of the first phase of the Australian Curriculum (English, mathematics, science and history). It was approved by the Ministerial Council in September 2009.
3. A large part of the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum v2.0* presents what has been agreed about the structure and development of the Australian Curriculum, with particular parts clearly indicating matters that require further discussion and debate. The ACARA website provides further information about how feedback can be provided to ACARA on the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum v2.0*. This second version of the shape paper will guide the development of the second phase of the Australian Curriculum (geography, languages and the Arts) and will inform the initial work on the rest of the Australian Curriculum.
4. Development of the Australian Curriculum over the next 12 months and discussion about the Australian Curriculum as a whole will result in the development of a further version of the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* towards the end of 2011.

2. Preamble

5. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for:

- a national curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 in specified learning areas
- a national assessment program aligned to the national curriculum that measures students' progress
- a national data collection and reporting program that supports:
 - analysis, evaluation, research and resource allocation
 - analysis, evaluation, research and resource allocation
 - accountability and reporting on schools
 - broader national achievement.

6. As part of its initial charter, ACARA was asked to commence curriculum development for English, mathematics, science and history. A second phase of work was authorised involving the development of an Australian Curriculum in geography, languages and the Arts. Subsequently, Australian education ministers agreed that a third phase of curriculum development will focus on health and physical education, information and communication technology, design and technology, economics, business, and civics and citizenship.

7. The establishment of ACARA can be seen as an outcome of many years of national collaboration in education. Twenty years ago, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs produced a collaborative statement on goals for schooling: the Hobart Declaration of 1989. Both the Hobart Declaration and the 1999 Adelaide Declaration authorised and stimulated the national effort.

8. The curriculum development work of ACARA is guided by the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, adopted by the Ministerial Council in December 2008. The Melbourne Declaration emphasises the importance of knowledge, skills and understanding of learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities as the basis for a curriculum designed to support 21st century learning.

3. An Australian Curriculum

Rationale

9. 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.

10. At the 60th Australian Education Council meeting held in Hobart in April 1989, education ministers produced a collaborative statement on goals for schooling: the Hobart Declaration. This statement was updated in 1999 as the Adelaide Declaration. In 2008, ministers nominated five major developments that, over the 20-year period, had changed the ways in which people interacted with each other and thought about the purposes of schooling. These changes were set out in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (see Box 1).

Box 1: Changes over the period 1989-2008 with implications for education

- Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of, and respect for, social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship.
- India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. Australians need to become 'Asia literate' by building strong relationships with Asia.
- Globalisation and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. Skilled jobs now dominate jobs growth and people with university or vocational education and training qualifications fare much better in the employment market than early school-leavers. To maximise their opportunities for healthy, productive and rewarding futures, Australia's young people must be encouraged not only to complete secondary education, but also to proceed into further training or education.
- Complex environmental, social and economic pressures, such as climate change, that extend beyond national borders pose unprecedented challenges, requiring countries to work together in new ways. To meet these challenges, Australians must be able to comprehend and use scientific concepts and principles, and approach problem solving in new and creative ways.
- Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are changing the ways people share, use, develop and process information and technology, and young people need to be highly skilled in ICT. While schools already employ these technologies in learning, there is a need to increase their effectiveness significantly over the next decade.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008, p.13.

3. An Australian Curriculum cont...

11. Education must not only respond to these remarkable changes but also, as far as possible, anticipate the conditions in which young Australians will need to function as individuals, citizens and workers when they complete their schooling. These future conditions are distant and difficult to predict. It is expected that almost all young Australians who begin primary school in 2011 will continue their initial education until 2022. Many will go on to further education or training through to the mid-2020s and later. Young people will need a wide and adaptive set of knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the changing expectations of society and to contribute to the creation of a more productive, sustainable and just society.

12. An Australian Curriculum in the 21st century needs to acknowledge the changing ways in which young people will learn and the challenges that will continue to shape their learning in the future. The curriculum is important in setting out what will be taught, what students need to learn and the expected quality of that learning.

13. The commitment to develop a national curriculum reflects a willingness to work together, across geographical and school-sector boundaries, to provide a world-class education for all young Australians. Working nationally makes it possible to harness collective expertise and effort in the pursuit of this common goal. It also offers the potential of economies of scale and a substantial reduction in the duplication of time, effort and resources.

14. The Australian Curriculum also means that all young Australians can learn about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, of their contribution to Australia, and of the consequences of colonial settlement for Indigenous communities, past and present. For Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, the Australian Curriculum promotes the importance of pursuing excellence within education settings which respect and promote their cultural identity.

3. An Australian Curriculum cont...

Goals of education

15. The Melbourne Declaration commits 'to supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' (see Box 2) and to promoting equity and excellence in education.

Box 2(a): Educational goals for young Australians

Successful learners:

- develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy and are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT, as a foundation for success in all learning areas
- are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
- are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines
- are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
- are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
- are on a pathway towards continued success in further education, training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives
- are motivated to reach their full potential.

Confident individuals:

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future — are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others
- have the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
- have the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members
- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions.

3. An Australian Curriculum cont...

Box 2(b): Educational goals for young Australians

Active and informed citizens:

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- appreciate Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture
- understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life
- are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia
- work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
- are responsible global and local citizens.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008, p.13.

4. Development of the Australian Curriculum

Propositions shaping the Australian Curriculum

16. The development of the Australian Curriculum is shaped by the following propositions.

- The Australian Curriculum recognises the entitlement of each student to knowledge, understanding and skills that provide a foundation for successful and lifelong learning and participation in the Australian community.
- The Australian Curriculum is presented as a continuum that makes clear to teachers what is to be taught across the years of schooling. It makes clear to students what they should learn and the quality of learning expected of them as they progress through school.
- The Australian Curriculum is based on the assumptions that each student can learn and 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.
- The Australian Curriculum is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework and builds on its key learning outcomes, namely: children have a strong sense of identity; children are connected with, and contribute to, their world; children have a strong sense of wellbeing; children are confident and involved learners; and children are effective communicators.
- The Australian Curriculum helps prepare all young Australians to become competent members of the community. It builds firm and meaningful foundation skills as well as providing the basis for developing expertise for the increasing number of students who move on to specialised advanced studies in academic disciplines, professions and technical trades.
- The primary audience for the Australian Curriculum is teachers. The curriculum is concise and expressed in plain language while preserving a complexity appropriate for professional practitioners. Consistency in terms of language and broad structure supports teachers in planning within and across learning areas.
- The Australian Curriculum specifies what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling and is designed to be taught well within the overall teaching time and with the resources available to teachers and students. School authorities make decisions about the allocation of time and other resources.
- For some learning areas, the Australian Curriculum will be written with the expectation that they will be taught in each year of schooling from Foundation to Year 10. For other areas, the Australian Curriculum will describe an entitlement that students will have the opportunity to learn across Foundation to Year 8, as well as additional learning they may choose and/or schools may choose to provide in Years 9–10.

4. Development of the Australian Curriculum cont...

- Jurisdictions, systems and schools will be able to implement the Australian Curriculum in ways that value teachers' professional knowledge, reflect local contexts and take into account individual students' family, cultural and community backgrounds. Schools and teachers determine pedagogical and other delivery considerations.
- The Australian Curriculum is established on a strong evidence base, which is related to learning, pedagogy and what works in professional practice, and has been benchmarked against international curricula.

Curriculum development process

17. The process for developing the Australian Curriculum has been designed to generate broad engagement with, and discussion and feedback about, the shape and content of the Australian Curriculum.

18. It involves four interrelated phases: curriculum shaping, curriculum writing, implementation and curriculum evaluation and review.

19. Curriculum shaping involves the development of a paper for each learning area setting out a broad outline of the proposed curriculum. Expert advice is sought in the development of an initial draft shape paper released for wide public consultation. Following modification of the draft in light of consultation and feedback, a final shape paper is published on ACARA's website.

20. Curriculum writing involves teams of writers, supported by expert advisory panels and ACARA curriculum staff, who draft content descriptions and achievement standards for Foundation to Year 12. The draft Australian Curriculum for each learning area is released for public consultation and is subsequently revised in light of the feedback. The writing stage culminates in publication of the Australian Curriculum for the learning area.

21. Curriculum implementation sees the Australian Curriculum delivered in an online environment for school authorities, schools and teachers to use. ACARA works with state and territory curriculum and school authorities to support their ongoing implementation planning.

22. Curriculum evaluation and review processes are put in place to monitor and review the Australian Curriculum based on implementation feedback. The evaluation process may result in minor changes to, or a revision of, the curriculum.

23. Major features, processes and broad timeframes for these phases are elaborated in the Curriculum Development Process paper which can be found at www.acara.edu.au. During the first few months of 2011 ACARA will review its process for stakeholder consultation and engagement and will subsequently revise its Curriculum Development process.

5. Scope of the Australian Curriculum

24. The Australian Curriculum has been written to take account of the growth and development of young people across the years of schooling, the diverse needs of the student population in Australian schools, and the knowledge, understanding and skills all young Australians are entitled to learn in terms of learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

25. The Australian Curriculum makes clear to teachers what is to be taught. It also makes clear to students what they should learn and the quality of learning expected of them. Schools are able to decide how best to deliver the curriculum, drawing on integrated approaches where appropriate and using pedagogical approaches that account for students' needs, interests and the school and community context. School authorities will be able to offer curriculum beyond that specified in the Australian Curriculum.

The curriculum across the years of schooling

26. For some areas the Australian Curriculum has been written with the intention that it is taught to all students in each year of schooling from Foundation to Year 10, with decisions to be made subsequently about further learning in the senior secondary years. For other areas the Australian Curriculum will be written for Foundation to Year 12, but with the intention that it is taught to all students across Foundation to Year 8, with subsequent decisions to be made about further learning in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12. Specific decisions about expected learning and options for further learning will be taken as the development of the Australian Curriculum proceeds into 2011.

27. The Australian Curriculum has been written to focus on an entitlement for all students while acknowledging that the needs and interests of students will vary and the curriculum should support schools and teachers to respond to these needs and interest. As a result, the curriculum will articulate what is expected for all students to learn as well as articulating additional learning options. Specific decisions about entitlements and opportunities for additional learning will be taken as the development of the Australian Curriculum proceeds into 2011.

Foundation Year to Year 2

28. In the early years of schooling, children have a natural curiosity about their world and their desire to make sense of it provides a platform to construct and review their learning through interactions with others, experimentation, scaffolding, explicit teaching, practice and play in the classroom and beyond. This helps them make sense of a world that is outside their immediate experience, as they connect new knowledge with what they already know or believe. This also sometimes provides an opportunity to challenge what they know or believe.

5. Scope of the Australian Curriculum cont...

29. The Australian Curriculum builds on the national Early Years Learning Framework and builds on its key learning outcomes, namely: children have a strong sense of identity; children are connected with, and contribute to, their world; children have a strong sense of wellbeing; children are confident and involved learners; and children are effective communicators. The Australian Curriculum is designed to accommodate the varied learning experiences and diverse backgrounds that children bring to school.

30. The Australian Curriculum for students between five and eight years of age (typically Foundation to Year 2) recognises the importance of communication, language and building relationships. It gives priority to foundation knowledge, understanding and skills that all children are expected to develop to enhance their opportunities for continued learning. In these years, priority is given to literacy and numeracy development because these are the foundations on which further learning is built. The foundation for literacy is built primarily in English and the foundation for numeracy primarily in mathematics. However, both literacy and numeracy must be reinforced and strengthened through learning in other contexts including science, history, geography and technologies.

31. Priority is also given to motor skills development, physical activity and the development of safe and healthy personal practices through the teaching of health and physical education. Equally, all students in these early years will have the opportunity to develop their sensory, cognitive and affective appreciation of the world around them through exploratory and creative learning. The opportunity to learn a language may also be available, subject to school and curriculum authority arrangements.

Years 3–8

32. During these years of schooling, students are moving from concrete to abstract thinking. They begin to understand and appreciate different points of view and can concentrate on tasks for longer periods of time. Their thought processes become more logical and consistent, and they gradually become more independent as learners. Students increasingly look for and value learning they perceive as relevant, consistent with personal goals, and/or leading to important outcomes. The transition from primary to secondary school coincides with a range of significant physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. Students often begin to question established conventions, practices and values. Their interests extend well beyond their own communities and they develop concerns about wider issues.

33. The curriculum for students between eight and 14 years of age (typically Years 3 – 8) is increasingly organised through distinct learning areas and also highlights and promotes links between learning areas to deepen knowledge and understanding. While continuing to prioritise English and literacy and mathematics and numeracy, the Australian Curriculum will deliver a comprehensive education that has children learning in each of the other areas of learning, as outlined in the Melbourne Declaration.

5. Scope of the Australian Curriculum cont...

34. While the curriculum focuses on an entitlement for all students, it also describes additional learning that might be provided in areas such as the arts, humanities and social sciences, and technologies. In secondary school settings, for example, the curriculum enables schools to build on a broad general education, organised around core learning areas, and to offer opportunities for students to select additional areas of study matched to their interests and needs.

Specific decisions about entitlements and opportunities for additional learning in particular learning areas will be taken as the development of the Australian Curriculum proceeds into 2011.

Years 9–10

35. The middle and upper secondary years of schooling can be seen as a period of transition to adulthood. Students have a clearer sense of their strengths, interests and goals. They begin to see themselves as active players in community life and are often concerned about major social and environmental issues and the ethical implications of human activity and knowledge.

36. In Years 9 and 10, the Australian Curriculum will be written to build on prior learning and deepen understanding in each learning area.

37. During the development of the curriculum for these years of schooling consideration will be given to who will determine what each student will have the opportunity to learn. Such consideration will take account of the opportunities to build on and deepen prior learning, to broaden learning, including through vocationally-oriented pathways and national trade cadetships, and to sustain student engagement and improve achievement.

38. The Australian Curriculum does not make assumptions about how the curriculum will be delivered in schools. Schools will continue to make decisions about how best to organise student learning according to student needs and interests and school and community contexts. In some cases, students will commence accredited senior secondary studies (general or vocational in nature) or undertake other programs developed by the school.

39. Flexibility is important because it allows schools to provide learning pathways that extend the learning entitlement and ensure all students are fully engaged and prepared to continue learning into the senior secondary years.

5. Scope of the Australian Curriculum cont...

Senior secondary years of schooling

40. The curriculum for students aged 16 to 18 years of age (typically Years 11 and 12) provides students with increased opportunities to make choices about pathways through school and beyond. These choices are informed by previous success and enjoyment, future options for training, learning or employment, and the setting in which the learning is to occur. Many young people in this age range have already been in part-time employment or will take up part-time jobs while undertaking their senior secondary schooling. The senior school curriculum offers more opportunities for specialisation in learning, including within the regular school program and through accredited vocational education and training.

The diversity of learners

41. Every student is entitled to enriching learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum. Students in Australian classrooms have multiple, diverse and changing needs that are shaped by individual learning histories and abilities as well as cultural and language backgrounds and socio-economic factors.

42. The Australian Curriculum has been 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 with diverse learning needs develop.

43. ACARA will work with school authorities to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and will produce advice and guidance about using the curriculum to address the diversity of student learning.

Students for whom English is another language or dialect

44. Standard Australian English is essential for success in Australian schools. All learning is accessed through language and success is measured through language.

45. Many students in Australian schools are learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) whose first language is a language other than Standard Australian English and who require additional support to assist them to develop English language proficiency. While many EAL/D students do well in school, there is a significant group of these learners who are performing well below the national average and who leave school without having achieved their potential.

46. The objectives of the Australian Curriculum are ultimately the same for all students. However, EAL/D learners must reach these objectives while simultaneously learning a new language and learning content and skills through that new language.

5. Scope of the Australian Curriculum cont...

They may require additional time and support, along with informed teaching which explicitly addresses their language needs.

47. The Australian Curriculum: English does not describe either the process of language development as it occurs for EAL/D learners, nor pay attention to the parts of language that second language learners find challenging. This will be addressed through a national EAL/D document which will support the Australian Curriculum in each learning area by describing how language proficiency develops. It will allow all teachers to identify the language levels of EAL/D learners and to pay attention to their specific learning requirements when teaching the learning area. This will ensure equity of access to the language and learning of each curriculum for all learners.

Students with special education needs

48. The objectives of the Australian Curriculum are the same for all students. The curriculum should offer students with special education needs rigorous, relevant and engaging learning experiences.

49. The majority of students with special education needs can engage with the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum provided the necessary adjustments are made by education authorities, schools and teachers to the complexity of curriculum content and to the means through which students demonstrate their learning. In order to meet students' learning needs, teachers will use a range of assessment information to locate the students' current level of achievement on the learning continuum represented by the Australian Curriculum and then modify their teaching in line with students' achievement levels.

50. Many students with special education needs are able to achieve educational standards commensurate with their peers, provided the necessary adjustments are made to instructional processes and to the means through which they demonstrate their learning.

51. In other cases, teachers will be required to make appropriate adjustments to the complexity or sophistication of the curriculum content descriptions and achievement standards. Adjustments should also be made to how progress is monitored and assessed in order to focus on reporting actual student achievement.

52. For a small percentage of students with special education needs, the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum content and achievement standards may not be accessible, meaningful and relevant even with adjustments. Most of these students have a significant intellectual disability. During 2011, ACARA will develop additional curriculum content and achievement standards for this group of students in order to develop an Australian Curriculum that is inclusive of every learner.

6. Elements of the Australian Curriculum

53. The Australian Curriculum describes a learning entitlement for each Australian student. It sets out what young people should be taught (through the specification of curriculum content from learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities) and an expectation of the quality of their learning (extent of knowledge, depth of understanding and sophistication of skills described through achievement standards).

54. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians identifies three broad categories of outcomes that the curriculum should deliver for students (see Box 3). Thus the Australian Curriculum is developed in terms of learning area knowledge, understanding and skills and general capabilities.

Box 3: Intended educational outcomes for young Australians

A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built

- The curriculum will include a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills. It will also enable students to build social and emotional intelligence and nurture student wellbeing through health and physical education in particular. The curriculum will support students to relate well to others and foster an understanding of Australian society, citizenship and national values including through the study of civics and citizenship. As a foundation for further learning and adult life, the curriculum will include practical knowledge and skills development in areas such as ICT and design and technology which are central to Australia's skilled economy and provide crucial pathways to post-school success.

Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications

- The curriculum will enable students to develop knowledge in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities and the arts; to understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life; and open up new ways of thinking. It will also support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline, which provides the foundation for interdisciplinary approaches to innovation and complex problem solving.

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 curriculum will support young people to develop a range of generic and employability skills that have particular application to the world of work and further education and training, such as planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams. Young people also need to develop the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008, p.13.

6. Elements of the Australian Curriculum cont...

55. The Australian Curriculum provides for rigorous, in-depth study, preferring depth to breadth wherever a choice needs to be made, with consideration also being given to the overall teaching and learning time available.

56. ACARA's Curriculum Design document provides indicative time advice to guide the drafting of the curriculum. Such an approach is not designed to establish time allocations for education systems and sectors, schools or teachers.

Curriculum content

Learning area knowledge, skills and understanding

57. The Australian Curriculum describes knowledge, skills and understanding organised by learning areas. The selection of content for particular learning areas takes into account the rapid expansion in bodies of knowledge and the challenges this presents for curriculum development.

58. For each learning area, the Australian Curriculum emphasises the knowledge, understanding and skills that form the entitlement of a learning area. Teachers are able to choose how best to introduce concepts and processes and how to progressively deepen understanding to maximise the engagement and learning of every student.

59. The Australian Curriculum is designed to ensure students develop the knowledge and understanding on which the major disciplines are based. Each discipline offers a distinctive lens through which we interpret experience, determine what counts as evidence and a good argument for action, scrutinise knowledge and argument, make judgments about value and add to knowledge.

60. Rather than being self-contained or fixed, disciplines are interconnected, dynamic and growing. A discipline-based curriculum should allow for cross-disciplinary learning that broadens and enriches each student's learning.

61. The Australian Curriculum presents curriculum content and achievement standards for the following learning areas and subjects as set out in the Melbourne Declaration:

- English
- mathematics
- science
- humanities and social sciences, specifically history, geography, economics and business, and civics and citizenship
- the Arts, specifically dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts
- languages
- health and physical education

6. Elements of the Australian Curriculum cont...

- technologies, specifically design and technology and information and communication technology, while also providing for learning in other technology areas.

62. 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 12. 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; or other important considerations such as the students’ developing sense of personal identity; or Australia’s geographical and historical context.

63. The scope and sequence for each learning area ensures learning is appropriately ordered and unnecessary repetition is avoided.

64. For the senior secondary years, the Australian Curriculum is organised through courses, each consisting of four units.

65. While individual courses are designed with particular student needs and interests in mind, the full range of student needs and interests will be met through suites of courses and/or through the full range of senior secondary courses available in a state or territory.

66. ACARA is responsible for developing curriculum content and achievement standards for certain senior secondary courses. States and territories will continue to offer additional senior secondary curriculum that does not overlap significantly with the Australian Curriculum courses. The list of Australian Curriculum courses may grow in time if there is national agreement.

67. Curriculum, assessment and certification authorities in each state and territory will be responsible for the delivery of nationally-agreed curriculum content and achievement standards for senior secondary courses within their jurisdiction, that is, determining their assessment, certification and quality assurance requirements.

General capabilities

68. The disciplines provide a foundation of learning in schools because they reflect the way in which knowledge has, and will continue to be, developed and codified. However, 21st century learning does not fit neatly into a curriculum solely organised by learning areas or subjects that reflect the disciplines. 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.

6. Elements of the Australian Curriculum cont...

69. As shown in Box 3, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians sees these general capabilities as including ‘planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams, the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines’.

70. General capabilities are represented across the learning areas to different degrees. Some are best developed within specific learning areas. Others can be developed in any learning area depending on teachers’ choices of classroom activities. Curriculum documents make explicit how the general capabilities can be addressed in each learning area.

71. The Australian Curriculum specifically covers the following general capabilities:

Literacy

Students become literate as they develop the skills to learn and communicate confidently at school and to become effective individuals, community members, workers and citizens. These skills include listening, reading and viewing, writing, speaking and creating print, visual and digital materials accurately and purposefully within and across all learning areas.

Numeracy

Students become numerate as they develop the capacities, confidence and dispositions to use mathematics at school, at home, at work and in community life. In the context of schooling, numeracy is about students engaging with whatever mathematics they need within and across all learning areas.

Information and communication technology (ICT) competence

Students develop ICT competence as they learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately when investigating, creating and communicating ideas and information at school, at home, at work and in their communities.

Critical and creative thinking

Students develop critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, ideas and possibilities, and use them in combination when seeking new pathways or solutions. In the context of schooling, critical and creative thinking are integral to activities that require reason, logic, imagination and divergence.

Ethical behaviour

Students develop ethical behaviour as they learn to understand and act in accordance with ethical principles. This includes understanding the role of ethical principles, values and virtues in human life; acting with moral integrity; acting with regard for others; and having a desire and capacity to work for the common good.

6. Elements of the Australian Curriculum cont...

Personal and social competence

Students develop personal and social competence as they learn to understand and manage themselves, their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively. They learn to understand and manage their emotions, develop concern and understanding for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, work effectively in teams and handle challenging situations constructively.

Intercultural understanding

Students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to understand themselves in relation to others. Students learn to respect and appreciate their own cultures and beliefs and those of others, and to engage with people of diverse cultures in ways that recognise differences and create connections between people.

72. For each of the general capabilities, continua of learning have been developed to describe the essential skills expected at particular points of schooling. They have been used to enhance the learning area content sequences and achievement standards and will assist teachers to plan for and to guide student learning of these important areas of the curriculum. State and territory curriculum and school authorities will determine the extent to which student learning of the general capabilities will be assessed and reported.

Cross-curriculum priorities

73. The Australian Curriculum must be both relevant to the lives of students and address the contemporary issues they face. With this and the education goals of the *Melbourne Declaration* in mind, the curriculum gives special attention to 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.

74. Each of these priorities is represented in learning areas in ways appropriate to that area. For each of the cross-curriculum priorities, a continuum of learning has been developed to ensure strong and coherent inclusion in the Australian Curriculum.

6. Elements of the Australian Curriculum cont...

Development of curriculum on a year-by-year or bands-of-school-years basis

75. In English and mathematics, much is known about sequences of learning, and there is empirical evidence to guide the writing of curriculum on a year-by-year basis. For science and history, the curriculum has also been developed on a year-by-year basis although the descriptions of skills in these areas, for example, are by bands of years.

76. Decisions about the structure of the curriculum for the remaining learning areas 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
- the frequency with which a 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.

Achievement standards

77. Achievement standards provide an expectation of the quality of learning students should typically demonstrate by a particular point in their schooling, that is, the extent of their knowledge, the depth of their understanding and the sophistication of their skills. Achievement standards comprise a written description and illustrative student work samples. The achievement standards can support formative and summative assessment practices and provide a basis for consistency of assessment and reporting.

78. The sequence of achievement standards, Foundation to Year 10, describes and illustrates progress in the learning area. This sequence provides teachers with a framework of growth and development in each of the learning areas. This will assist teachers to plan for and monitor learning during the course of a semester or year. It will also assist teachers to make judgments about the extent and quality of learning.

79. Work samples play a key role in establishing and communicating expectations described in the achievement standards. The examples of student work will include the assessment task and a student's response, with annotations setting out the basis for the teacher's judgment about the quality of learning evident in that response in relation to the achievement standard.

6. Elements of the Australian Curriculum cont...

80. Together the achievement standards and annotated work samples will facilitate teacher decisions about whether students have achieved the standards.

81. The development of the achievement standards takes into account what is known from research about the development of student learning in the different learning areas. If teachers are to understand individuals' current levels of attainment so they can target students' needs in their teaching, they must have a grasp of the growth and development of students' thinking about fundamental concepts in an area of learning. A sequence of achievement standards across Foundation to Year 10 provides teachers with a sequence of development which will assist them to do this.

The achievement standards for each learning area will be validated during the first year(s) of implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

82. For the senior secondary years of schooling, course-specific achievement standards will be developed. These will describe a range of levels of achievement expected of students studying the particular course. They will make no assumptions about methods of assessment and will allow flexibility for teachers, schools and jurisdictions to determine the particular assessment methods to be used for informing judgments about student learning.

83. ACARA will work with state and territory curriculum and certification authorities to develop an agreed model for the development of senior secondary achievement standards. For English, mathematics, science and history the development of senior secondary achievement standards will occur in early 2011.

A reporting framework – Foundation to Year 10

84. Under current national agreements, twice a year all schools are required to provide parents and carers with plain language reports on student progress and achievement, using grades A–E or an equivalent five-point scale, clearly defined against specific achievement standards.

85. ACARA will work with state and territory curriculum and school authorities to develop nationally consistent approaches to assessment and reporting. Until there is agreement on such approaches, assessment and reporting of student achievement will continue to be determined by relevant state or territory curriculum and/or school authorities.

86. The Australian Curriculum achievement standards provide a basis for a nationally-consistent approach to assessment and reporting.

87. Schools will be responsible for assessing their students and reporting their progress and achievement.

7. Teaching, learning, assessing and reporting

88. Within any year group of students there exists a range of prior achievement that a teacher takes into account when planning for teaching and learning. The Australian Curriculum, for English, mathematics, science and history, has been written on a year by year basis to assist teachers to identify current levels of student achievement and to plan for further learning, building on prior learning and achievement.

89. Schools and teachers continue to have the flexibility to enable students to progress at different rates through the curriculum. The year-by-year structure of English, mathematics, science and history provides an indication of the content and achievement standards it is expected most students in particular grades will meet, but more importantly it provides a map that defines key indicators of learning development and progress. It continues to be the case that schools and teachers should provide flexible pathways to enable every student to make progress in their learning.

90. To meet students' learning needs and cater for the wide range of performance in classes, teachers need to be able to identify current levels of student achievement using the Australian Curriculum and tailor their teaching in line with these levels. In many cases, this will involve identifying and filling in specific gaps in a student's knowledge, understanding or skills while still focusing instruction on the curriculum content described for their particular year of schooling. In other cases, this will involve focusing instruction on curriculum content at a lower or higher level than that set out for a particular year of schooling.

91. Teachers will use the achievement standards, at the end of a period of teaching, to make on-balance judgments about the quality of learning demonstrated by students and specifically whether they have achieved at, above or below the standard.

92. In making these judgments, teachers will draw on assessment data they have collected during the course of the teaching period as evidence. These judgments about the quality of learning will be one source of feedback to students and their parents and will inform formal reporting processes.

93. If teachers have judged that student achievement is below the expected standard this suggests there should be some review of the teaching programs and practice to assist individual students in improving their learning in the future. It also suggests additional support and targeted teaching will be needed to ensure the student does not fall behind.

7. Teaching, learning, assessing and reporting cont...

94. Assessment of the Australian Curriculum will take place at different levels and for different purposes, including:

- ongoing formative assessment within classrooms for the purposes of monitoring learning and providing feedback, for teachers to inform their teaching and for students to inform their learning
- summative assessment for the purposes of twice-yearly reporting by schools to parents and carers on the progress and achievement of students
- annual testing of Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students' levels of achievement in aspects of literacy and numeracy conducted as part of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)
- periodic sample testing of specific learning areas within the Australian Curriculum as part of the National Assessment Program (NAP).

8. Implementation of the Australian Curriculum

95. Implementation of the Australian Curriculum means teaching, assessing and reporting is based on the curriculum content and achievement standards as approved by education ministers.

96. Education ministers have agreed that substantial implementation of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history will have been achieved by the end of 2013.

97. In the first year of the Australian Curriculum's implementation, ACARA will collect further samples of student work and will validate the achievement standards, drawing on data from schools.

98. While the process of implementing the Australian Curriculum is a matter for each state and territory, ACARA will assist states and territories through leadership and advice on the Australian Curriculum and by coordinating implementation planning.

99. Implementation paths and timelines, up to the end of 2013, are likely to vary by learning areas depending on the extent of the differences between the new Australian Curriculum and existing state and territory curricula.

100. For each phase of Australian Curriculum development, ACARA will work with state and territory education authorities to map the extent of change and assist them in developing implementation plans.

101. State and territory school and curriculum authorities are responsible for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. At the national level, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Education Services Australia (ESA) will play a key role supporting state and territory authorities. Professional associations will also play a role in supporting the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. One of the benefits of a national curriculum is that national and state and territory resources can be pooled to support all teachers. At a local level, it is expected there will be extensive use of local and site-based professional learning.

9. Quality assurance and review of the Australian Curriculum

102. The Australian Curriculum is a dynamic curriculum. The online publication of the curriculum facilitates ongoing monitoring and review as well as providing the opportunity to update the curriculum in a well-managed and effectively communicated manner.

103. Any updating will take into account review and evaluation data; new national and international knowledge and practice about learning, teaching, curriculum design and implementation; and contemporary research in discipline and cross-discipline areas.

104. In this way, the Australian Curriculum will be subject to evaluation and validation during implementation and will continue to be benchmarked against the curricula of countries that are leading the world in education excellence and performance.

10. Towards a world-class Australian Curriculum

105. The Australian Curriculum provides a world-class curriculum. The Australian Curriculum:

- has been subject to extensive and sustained consultation during its development
- has been benchmarked against curricula of leading nations during the development process
- sets challenging standards for each student
- does not overload the curriculum
- pursues deep learning.

106. 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, society, to compete in a globalised world and to thrive in the information-rich workplaces of the future.

107. While the traditional structure of scope and sequence within discrete learning areas is retained, the Australian Curriculum gives explicit attention to seven general capabilities and three cross-curriculum priorities. This will ensure Australian students are able to learn across disciplines to develop and build new expertise, as well as function effectively in the communities and workplaces of the 21st century.

108. The Australian Curriculum will be published online, via the website www.australiancurriculum.edu.au, which is accessible to all members of the Australian community. Publishing the Australian Curriculum online provides flexibility in how people use and organise the curriculum. For example, users can view, download and print the curriculum for a particular learning area at one year level or across multiple year levels. They can also view, download and print content with a focus on the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

