

MEDIA RELEASE

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PROPOSED REVISIONS: AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM – CONSULTATION OPENS

Proposed revisions to the Australian Curriculum for Foundation – Year 10 (F–10) have today been released for public comment.

“On behalf of the ACARA Board, I am delighted to welcome the release of proposed revisions to the Australian Curriculum – revisions that aim to give our students a curriculum of excellence, which is amongst the best in the world,” said Belinda Robinson, ACARA Chair.

“The Australian Curriculum reflects our national aspirations for our students and future generations and this Review seeks to ensure we set high expectations for them and equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to be confident and creative individuals, lifelong learners, and active and informed members of their communities, including our national and global communities.

“Our students deserve our best efforts and these revisions come at a time when our students’ performance in recent international assessments demonstrates that we need to raise the bar and set challenging but achievable standards. In revising this curriculum, our focus has been our students and preparing them for the world they will inherit, for the jobs, challenges and opportunities of the future.”

The Australian Curriculum establishes the expectations for what all young Australians should be taught, regardless of where they live or their background.

The Review includes revisions to all eight learning areas (English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies, Health and Physical Education, and Languages), as well as the three cross-curriculum priorities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia, and Sustainability) and the general capabilities, such as Critical and Creative Thinking.

ACARA CEO, David de Carvalho, added: “We have benchmarked ourselves against, and looked to adapt, where relevant from, the best curricula internationally. The national collaborative review effort has worked to deliver a less crowded and more helpful curriculum for teachers and students, reducing and refining content to focus on what is most essential for students to learn, and to be much clearer for teachers on what they have to teach to support improved student outcomes”.

“These revisions highlight the need to support teachers to help students reach their full potential and the focus has been on identifying for teachers the essential content they need to teach, and their students to learn.”

ACARA’s review process has involved teachers and curriculum experts from all states and territories, and the government and non-government sectors.

“From talking to teachers and principals across Australia, we know that many find the curriculum somewhat unwieldy and difficult to navigate. Giving them more time to teach essential content in a more in-depth manner is important,” said Janet Davy, Director Curriculum, ACARA. “We do not want teachers to have to spend excessive time interpreting the curriculum. The revisions remove the guesswork and provide clearer expectations as to the essential content we want all students to learn.”

Changes include:

- significantly improving the content descriptions and achievement standards – the core curriculum that teachers use to plan, teach and assess learning – by simplifying expression, explaining requirements more clearly and reducing ambiguity
- reducing content across the primary school curriculum, with greater consistency and coherence in organisation, language and expectations across all learning areas
- improving the content elaborations – the illustrations and examples of ways to teach the content – to show how the teaching and learning of the learning area content can be supported using the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities
- ensuring a clear and coherent Foundation year curriculum that makes it clear what teachers need to teach in this important first year and to ensure content in Foundation builds on the Early Years Learning Framework.

The proposed revisions to the Australian Curriculum are now available for public comment from 29 April until 8 July 2021. Feedback and input will be used to develop final revisions for consideration of education ministers.

“We want teachers, principals, education specialists, parents and the wider community to let us know what they think of the proposed revisions,” Mr de Carvalho said. “Reviewing the national curriculum is not an effortless task – there has been plenty of robust discussion and there will continue to be – and that is welcome.

“Curriculum should always be a work in progress. It should be contested and of keen interest to us all, but in contesting our ideas, we should also ensure it is the needs of our students that are paramount. Responses will go towards shaping the new Australian Curriculum to ensure it is serving our children and young people and equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need.”

Background

The Australian Curriculum underpins teaching and learning in all Australian schools and is reviewed every six years. Over the last nine months, ACARA has been consulting widely with key education stakeholders and groups.

Some of the work has included:

- eighteen reference groups of around 360 practising teachers and curriculum specialists from across Australia
- a program of research benchmarking the Australian Curriculum against the curricula of Singapore, Finland, British Columbia and New Zealand
- feedback from states and territories on the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum
- an informal listening tour of 24 primary schools from each sector in each jurisdiction to talk to teachers and principals
- engaging with national teacher and principal professional associations and other subject matter experts
- reviewing the latest national and international developments and research in each learning area.

Public feedback will be sought via the new consultation website

www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/consultation from 29 April 2021 until 8 July 2021.

The updated version of the F–10 Australian Curriculum, once approved by ministers, will be made available on a new Australian Curriculum website at the start of 2022.

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Third party attributable quotes regarding the Australian Curriculum Review

“PETAA is pleased to have participated in the consultations around the review and drafting of the revised Australian Curriculum: English. Curriculum renewal is a process of aspiration and challenge; because it is at once an opportunity to record what a nation imagines for its young people, a challenge because it must accommodate the interests and perspectives of many. Like all of those who have contributed to the drafting of the English curriculum, PETAA looks forward to this next stage of consultation and to helping ensure our curriculum is world class and fit for our young people’s futures.”

Dr Pauline Jones, President of the Primary English Teaching Association (PETAA) and Associate Professor Language in Education, University of Wollongong.

“The revised Australian Curriculum: Mathematics will provide essential opportunities for students to engage in and develop a range of mathematical processes that will assist them to confidently apply mathematical concepts and understandings to solve problems. By making the proficiencies more explicit and embedding them within the mathematical content of the curriculum, teachers will be

able to provide a more authentic approach to mathematics learning and inquiry that will equip our students well for life and work.”

Associate Professor Catherine Attard, president of Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia (MERGA)

“The capacity to use mathematics to understand and make predictions about natural and social phenomena, such as events related to health, the environment and disadvantage, is now more important than ever before. This is reflected, for example, in both the mass and social media where the use of mathematics and statistics as evidence to support statements or claims is now commonplace. To interpret and respond to information about events in the real-world requires an understanding of mathematical processes in addition to facts and procedures. These include mathematical modelling and investigations which focus on solving authentic problems that are encountered in personal, civic and work life. This focus is an important enhancement of the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics.”

Professor Vince Geiger, Research Program Director: STEM in Education Institute of Learning Sciences and Teacher Education Australian Catholic University

“By moving from conceptual statements in Science Understanding and Science as a Human Endeavour, the revised curriculum aims to make it more clear to teachers the breadth and depth of what should be taught at each year level, whilst making the investigative nature of science more explicit. The revised science inquiry strand will encourage teachers to expand from a ‘fair testing’ model of inquiry and allow for more activities with links to Mathematics and Technology. The Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) recognises that teaching contexts vary hugely around Australia and encourages teachers of science to become involved in the public consultation process, either individually, through their school, through their local teacher associations or through ASTA’s continued involvement in the review process.”

Australian Science Teachers Association

“Developing and maintaining a national curriculum that is responsive to and meets the needs of students is no small feat. The deliberate priority and focus given to increase manageability of the primary years’ curriculum acknowledge the complexity and the importance of these years in building a strong connected framework for lifelong learning. The proposed identification of core concepts in the Australian Curriculum: Science can support teachers to make connections and linkages for learners and the links highlighted between mathematical thinking and computational thinking will provide useful connections within and across the STEM learning areas.”

Claudette Bateup, Director Education, Australian Academy of Science

“Through exploring the Australian constitutional heritage and story and contemporary relevance, including that of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, we are empowering all our school students to become informed, engaged and active citizens of the future. Our teachers also have the right to be supported by excellent and factual curriculum, and support resources, so that they can deliver their lessons through innovative and engaging contemporary mediums. Our students and teachers from across Australia will be grateful beneficiaries of this outstanding work.”

Kerry Jones, CEO, Constitution Education Fund, Director, Constitution Education Fund Australia

“The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) welcomes the review of the Australian Curriculum through an open, transparent and thorough consultation process. The final curriculum for The Arts was endorsed for national implementation in 2015 and it is now an appropriate time to reflect upon, update and further refine that curriculum. It is time to make our national arts curriculum even better – a curriculum that enables rigorous, creative and authentic learning across Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts.”

Doctor John Nicholas Saunders, Chair, National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE)

“The Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE) was very pleased to be invited to be consulted as part of the Technologies Curriculum Review. The ACCE Board overwhelmingly supports the realignment of the Technologies Curriculum and the Digital Literacy Capability (formerly the ICT capability) which removed duplications and more clearly defined and focussed the content of each of these areas. Additionally, we appreciate that the areas where there are natural linkages between Maths and Science Curriculum content have been explicitly documented. Overall, we regard these two documents now complement each other well and have further improved a curriculum that was already highly regarded internationally.”

Leanne Cameron, President, Australian Council for Computers in Education

“The revision of the Health and Physical Education Australian Curriculum guidance has embedded sexuality and respectful relationships education in a clear, explicit and sequential way that will assist systems and sectors to develop curriculum support materials and guidance that explicitly focuses on respect, inclusion, gender, power and consent in a strength-based approach that acknowledges what young people want to learn about.”

Associate Professor Debbie Ollis, Deakin University, Member of ACARA’s Consent Expert Group

“The revised structure, renewed focus on language learning and consistency of knowledge and skills within and across the range of languages provide scope for jurisdictional interpretation as well as the opportunity for our curriculum to align with international best practice.”

Mary Garland, Curriculum Leader, Languages: Years 9 to 12 Learning, Department of Education, Tasmania