

Consultation Feedback Report

Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography Paper

Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to present the key findings from the consultation feedback in relation to the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper.

There were 2 sources of consultation feedback:

- an online survey on the ACARA website where respondents completed a rating scale for each question and were also able to write a comment
- written response documents that were faxed, emailed or posted to ACARA.

Feedback was submitted by key stakeholders of throughout Australia including:

- State and Territory curriculum authorities
- organisations (professional associations, schools, businesses, universities, non-Government organisations)
- individuals (teachers [current and retired], parents, students).

Refer to Appendix 1 for the online survey questions and Appendix 2 for the breakdown of online and written responses.

To present the feedback received, quotes included in this report are representative of the typical comments expressed by a variety of jurisdictions organisations and individuals and Australia-wide.

The consultation feedback has been analysed in relation to the sections of the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper including the rationale, definition, organisation of the curriculum and outline of content.

The analysis identified key strengths and matters for improvement and these are summarised below:

Key Strengths

- rationale (the way it explains geography and its purpose)
- Inquiry based learning skills and fieldwork (fundamental to best practice and engaging geography)
- content: F-2, Years 3-4 (geographical skills, content and its progression is most appropriate and interesting to students)
- flexibility for case studies F-12.

Matters for Improvement

- terminology (unclear, vague and used inconsistently, for example environment, indigenous, Asia)

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- content Years 7-10, senior secondary years (inappropriate, boring and unengaging).
 - citizenship (strengthen the language used and explicitness of active citizenship)
 - organisation (present course as knowledge and understanding , inquiry and geographic skills rather than place, space environment)
 - over emphasis on human geography as compared to physical geography (unbalanced)
 - over prescriptiveness in setting the context for learning (e.g. Canberra fieldwork and the list of countries important to Australia)
 - consideration of non-specialist primary teachers teaching geography F-6
 - status after Year 8 (arose in some of the Year 7-10 feedback where it was given on the assumption that geography was mandatory F-10).

The content of this consultation report is presented as ‘Key Findings; Key Strengths and Matters for Improvement. It reflects the sections of the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper upon which feedback was requested. Each section explains the level of agreement from respondents by way of a graph, key strengths and matters for improvement supported by a selection of quotes from the feedback submitted by curriculum authorities, organisations and individuals:

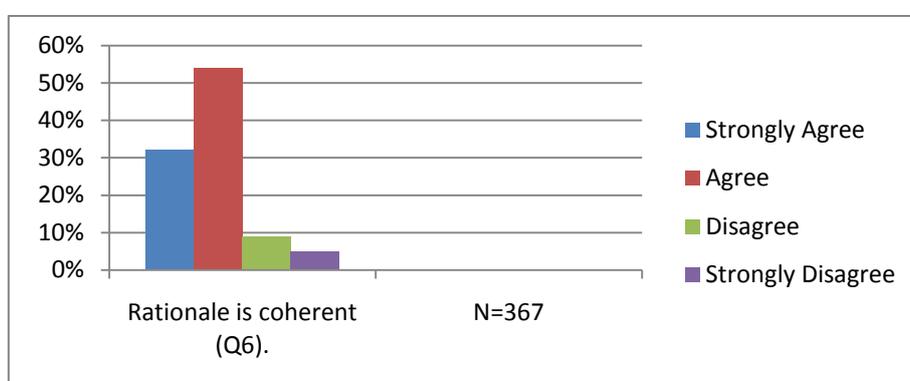
- (i) Rationale
- (ii) Definition
- (iii) Cross curriculum dimensions (now renamed to cross curriculum priorities) and general capabilities
- (iv) Curriculum organisation and strands
- (v) Content: f-2
- (vi) Content: 3-6
- (vii) Content: 7-10
- (viii) Content: senior secondary years
- (ix) Appropriateness of content
- (x) Overall comments

Key Findings – Key Strengths and Matters for Improvement

The key findings are based on the responses to the online survey and the written submissions. Responses were from State and Territory curriculum authorities, organisations and individuals. The feedback from the online survey was analysed using an online survey software application, Survey Methods. The instrument of feedback analysis for all other submissions (separate to the online survey) was NVivo software.

(i) Rationale

The rationale in the draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum; Geography paper addressed the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of Geography as well as the aims for a K-12 syllabus. It was geographically sound to explicitly refer to the key geographical inquiry questions in the rationale of the Draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper. Overall, the rationale is deemed to be a strength.



Key Strengths

The positive feedback overwhelmingly indicated that the rationale is coherent and clearly justifies the position of Geography in the curriculum. 85% of online respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the explanation about the rationale of geography.

The rationale, for the most part, represents a clear and coherent statement of the discipline’s relevance in a contemporary curriculum context. (Geography Teachers Association, NSW)

The rationale is in depth and provides a coherent explanation of geography to the education of students. It provides well justified reasoning of the importance of geography and how essential the subject matter is for all students nationwide. (#5 online response)

Stakeholders welcomed the rich and well written articulation in the rational and aims of fostering a sense of awe and wonder and meaning and purpose within students. (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VIC)

The rationale is well thought out and provides a solid foundation for the subject of geography. The definition of geography is excellent. Point 13 of the rationale is excellent and could be placed even earlier because it states what Australia wants for students in geography. It will be very

useful for teachers who do not have a background in geography. The aims are sound and include the basis for practical geography to be taught in schools, not just theory in a classroom setting. The emphasis on using new technologies is particularly commended. (Catholic Education, SA)

The three sections, 'What is geography', 'Why geography' and 'Aims for the K-12 geography curriculum' provide the basis for a comprehensive rationale that describes the scope of geography and the importance of the discipline (NSW Board of Studies)

Matters for Improvement

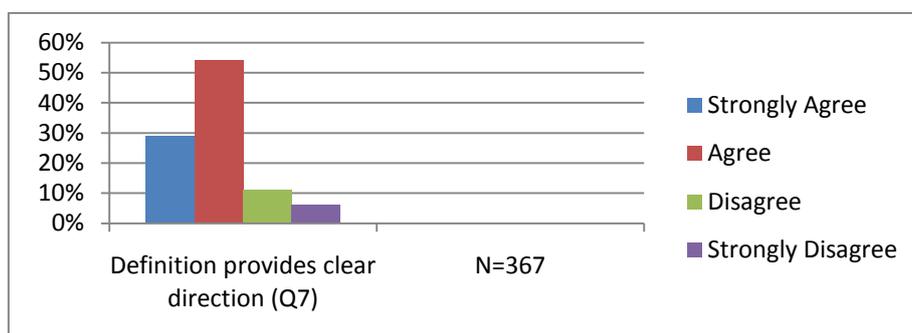
Whilst many respondents supported the rationale, the recurring issues focused on the length of the rationale (although the content was pleasing) and the definition of the term 'environment'. The professional associations provided the most detail in their feedback.

It is important to note that 'environment' is defined by way of a footnote....The lack of clarity here may be confusing for students (and non specialist teachers). (Geography Teachers Association, NSW)

It (the rationale) is too long. We should be able to explain ourselves (as Geographers) more simply. The use of the word 'environment' is causing problems...Having to use a footnote in the 1 sentence definition means that it is not a straightforward definition. (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc and Geography Teachers Association of Queensland Inc)

(ii) Definition

The definition of geography and the direction that it provides was embedded in the rationale, therefore, feedback was similar to that indicated in the previous section (Q6).



Key Strengths

The positive feedback indicated that the definition of geography provides direction as a school subject. There was a combined 80% of online respondents who indicated that they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the definition of geography.

It (the definition) provides a clear direction for geography as a school subject but allows enough scope to ensure individual schools can engage with local tasks while still meeting course guidelines. (#3 online response)

The definition provides a solid foundation for the study of geography in our schools (Department of Education and Training, ACT)

Matters for Improvement

Again, whilst many respondents indicated their agreement with the content of the definition, the recurring areas of concern focused on the wordiness and length of the definition, the clarity of an explicit definition and the possible reduction in hours for teaching geography.

The definition does provide a direction for Geography as a school subject, however, it is unnecessarily convoluted. (#27 online response)

Teacher friendly to those with some geography background but not to others... Subheadings could help. (Department of Education and Training, Tasmania)

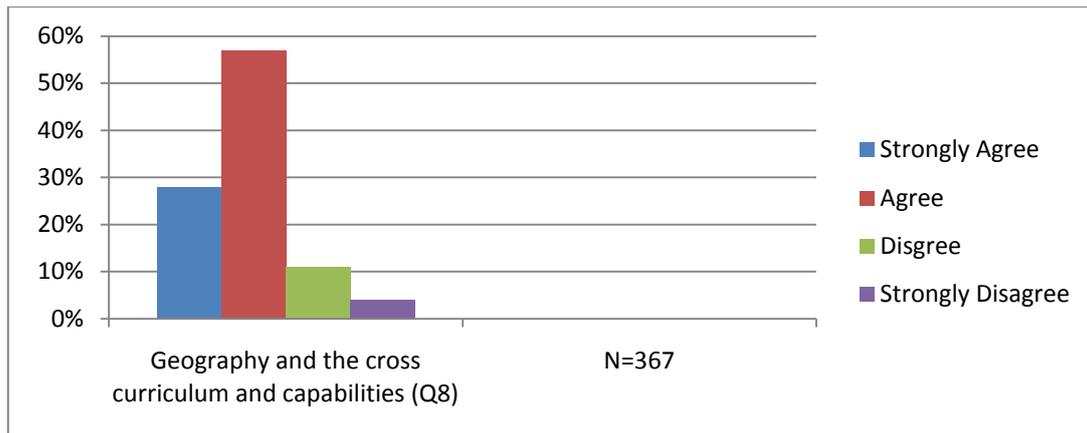
Stakeholders preferred the terms natural environment and human environment, therefore it is proposed to use these two terms instead of biophysical and built environments (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VIC)

The definition was deemed to provide a clear direction for the subject, however, there was a request that this section of the document link more explicitly to the idea that geography students are active citizens and are encouraged to take action on particular issues they feel strongly about (Geography Teachers Association, South Australia)

The definition of 'environment' should be reconsidered to ensure the meaning is clear, unambiguous and accessible to teachers, students and the community...the role of geography within civics and citizenship education could be strengthened. Geography can be an effective context to advocate for, and persuade students to take individual and community action (NSW Board of Studies)

(iii) Cross Curriculum Dimensions and General Capabilities

It is intended that geography incorporates as appropriate the three cross curriculum dimensions (now priorities) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, sustainability and Australia's engagement with Asia across the topics from F-12. The general capabilities are also intended to be integrated throughout the F-12 draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper.



Key Strengths

84% of online respondents agreed that there was an appropriate emphasis on the cross curriculum dimensions and general capabilities.

This section clearly articulates the relationship geography has with the cross curriculum priorities and general capabilities. Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia was strongly supported for being able to challenge the stereotypes and to enable students to understand Australia’s place in the region. (Department of Education and Children’s Services, SA)

For the most part, the section is well written and is, therefore, supported. (Geography Teachers Association, NSW)

The Shape Paper clearly articulates the connections of the nine general capabilities to the study of geography. The literacy, numeracy, ICT and ethical behaviours capabilities, in particular, have very strong connections to consumer and financial literacy. (Australian Securities and Investments Commission and Australian Government Financial Literacy Board)

The description of the three cross curriculum dimensions in geography is well done and indicates how richly geography as a learning area picks up these dimensions. Clearly geography is a perfect vehicle for all three...Similarly it is clear that geography provides rich opportunities for many of the general capabilities as illustrated by the Shape Paper. (Catholic Education, SA)

Matters for Improvement

Although only 16% of online respondents ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with this question, out of the jurisdictions, organisations and individuals who completed written submissions, 60% of them expressed similar concerns about the lack of inclusion of citizenship and the need for greater explicitness about the relationship of geography to the cross curriculum dimensions (particularly with terminology in the *Engagement with Asia* and the *Indigenous history and culture* sections) and general capabilities in the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper.

Examples of the feedback received are provided below:

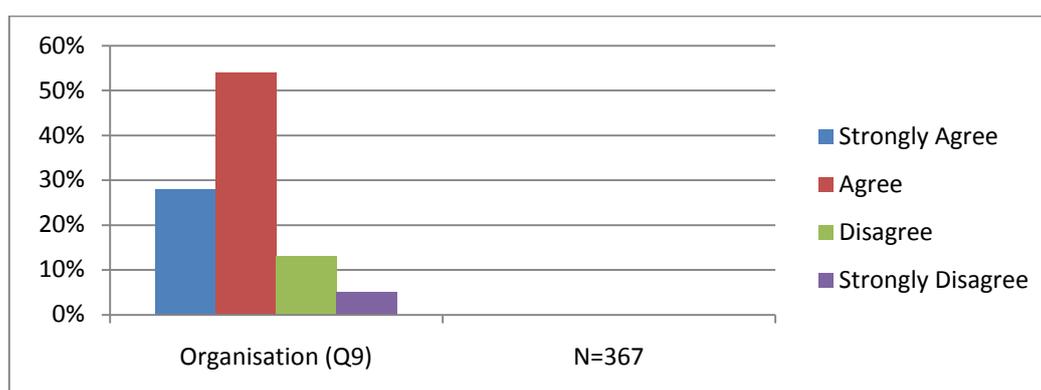
In the Indigenous history and culture section there is a broad claim that “indigenous knowledge traditions have enriched geography as a discipline with the western knowledge tradition.” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems enrich geography through connections to country, through language and kinship and through descriptions of land, sea, stars and song lines. These connections add another lens through which to look at the world and the environment that goes beyond place. It is important in the decision making element of geography that students have the opportunity to learn that there are many ways of understanding the ‘why of where’ that are not predetermined by western ideas of ownership and interaction with the land. (Queensland Studies Authority)

...please make this (Asia-Pacific region) consistent in all syllabus documents. Asia needs to be defined explicitly – use the ABS definition... (Asia Education Foundation)

The three cross curricula dimensions provide opportunities to address some of the aims of the Melbourne Declaration but these do not cover all the aims of active citizenship nor are they explicit about how the perspectives are to be dealt with in each learning area and how links can be made between learning areas. (Geography Teachers Association, Victoria)

(iv) Curriculum Organisation and Strands

Geography has practical and theoretical perspectives. Knowledge and understanding addresses facts and geographical concepts, relationships, place and space, environment and sustainability. Inquiry and skills relates to identification questions, methodology, skills and critical analysis as well as ‘where to why’. The organisation has been presented as 4 columns; conceptual focus, place, environment, space. This has been met with mixed reactions in relation to clarity of presenting the proposed content. The strong leaning towards inquiry based learning skills are fundamental to best practice in geography. Overall, the ‘curriculum organisation and strands’ section was another well received facet of the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper.



Key Strengths

The feedback indicated that inquiry based learning and curriculum flexibility were the key strengths in relation to the organisation of geographical content. There was strong support for the emphasis on inquiry based learning as indicated by over 60% of online respondents and written submissions to both questions.

Dividing the organisation in to geographical skills and knowledge is good practice and enables students to develop both a theoretical and practical understanding of the subject. (#10 online response)

It is pleasing to see the emphasis assigned to inquiry based learning. This approach is consistent with the methodology underpinning the NSW Geography syllabuses...This will enable teachers some freedom to adapt units to suit their own location & expertise. (Geography Teachers Association, NSW)

There is strong support for the integration of strands through inquiry based learning. The strands as proposed are practical and consistent with the first phase subjects. Geographical skills and methods communicate clear expectations of students. (Queensland Studies Authority)

The flexibility evident in the document allows for schools to draw on local contextual factors thereby making this learning area more relevant and engaging for students. (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, QLD)

Matters for Improvement

25% of online respondents 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the organisation of geography in relation to place, space and environment and in particular the prescription of particular sites and countries, as indicated in several written responses:

The strands of place, space and environment are confusing and not supportive of integrated learning,..The organisers should be changed to knowledge and understanding and geographical inquiry and skills. This would align geography with history organisers (Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia)

While sub-strands may be a useful curriculum design tool for writers, it is strongly recommended that the curriculum ois divided into two parts – knowledge and understanding and inquiry and skills – with no sub strands. (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VIC)

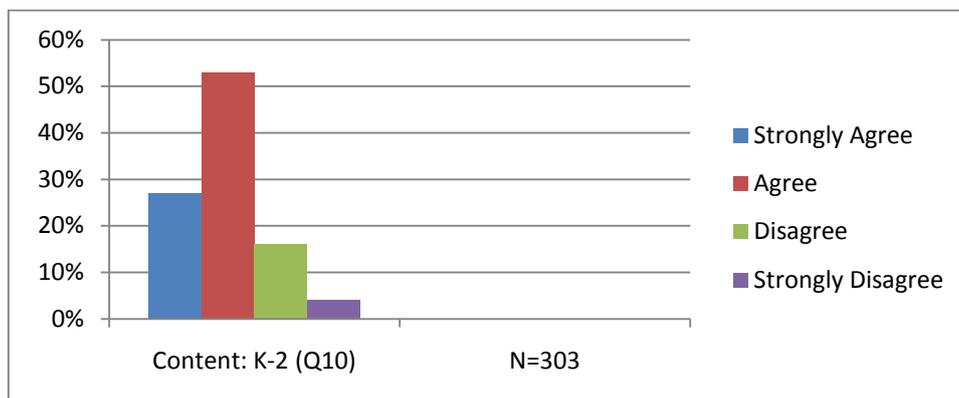
Geographical knowledge and understanding and Geographical skills are appropriate...The analytical perspectives of place, space and environment are important in the study of geography but they do not work well as separate organisers of the curriculum. Place, space and environment are inter-related features of geography that should be

represented in integrated content statement that allow students to develop deep knowledge and understanding and apply skills within geographical contexts (NSW Board of Studies)

The list of countries which are important to Australia is very limiting and I believe should be avoided. In some cases these countries will change dramatically over time depending on world events and Australian interests... Fieldwork to Canberra is essential/mandatory? If so, funding will be needed to assist students. (Head Teacher Geography, VIC)

(v) Content: F-2

The proposed content for Foundation to Year 2 includes an element of ‘play’ (which has had mixed reactions as to the appropriateness of this form of learning) and a focus on ‘exploring the geographies of their own lives and of places near and far’. The framework of this learning is to ask basic geographical questions and observational techniques which is the beginning of fieldwork methodologies. Overall, this section was highly supported by 80% of online respondents and strong support was also expressed by the professional associations.



Key Strengths

Many respondents perceived this section as a good piece of geography for the very young student. The strengths are indicated in the comments below:

Weather and seasons are appropriate for geographic study for these years. (Asia Education Teachers Association)

Like the idea that K-2 is not confined to study of the local area but has a global perspective...specifically like the mention of play as a focus for learning. This connects well with the early years learning framework. (Department of Education and Training, TAS)

The statement ‘play is a central part of learning’ is very important. (Queensland Studies Authority)

Asking children to observe, describe and ask basic questions is effective and appropriate for K-2. The geographical skills are suitable.

(Primary teacher, NSW)

We are pleased to see that case studies in these years are not to be confined to the students' own local areas...research shows that young children are interested in distant places and parents and teachers have always known this (think of children's stories) (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc and Geography Teachers Association of Queensland Inc)

Stakeholders supported the focus on geographical awareness in Years K-2, geographical investigations in Years 3-4 and community involvement in Years 5-6. (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VIC)

There was general support for the introduction of fieldwork in to the primary curriculum. (Brisbane Catholic Education Office)

Matters for Improvement

The issue about the appropriateness of 'play' and the specialty of geography through fieldwork was raised by a small proportion of respondents (20%)

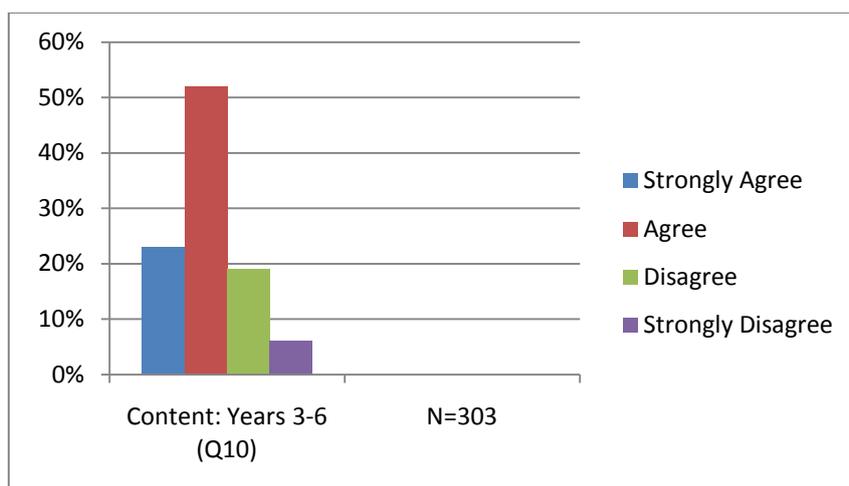
Play is not a central part of learning for Grade 1-2, only Prep. This comment is not appropriate for this age. (Primary teacher, QLD)

Fieldwork will need careful explanation and the subject specialist vocabulary will need to be managed for non specialists (teacher, QLD)

Teachers in F-7 are often not specifically Geography trained...therefore, more specific content details are required. (Associated Christian Schools)

(vi) Content: Years 3-6

The proposed content for this section is based on geographical investigation i.e. fieldwork. There is an equal emphasis on physical and human geography components and a good integration of geographical skills such as map reading and interpretation. For Years 3-4, the location studies and investigation about how these places have been used and changed over time by a combination of natural and human influences has been well received. There has been more concern expressed about the continuation of the location studies into Years 5-6 as a comparative study due to the anticipation that it may be boring and repetitive. The increased use of geographical skills is regarded as too difficult, especially for non specialist teachers.



Key Strengths

75% is a substantial level of support for this section of the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography paper. Responses deemed it to be particularly appropriate for Years 3-4 in relation to organisation, pedagogical development and geographical content. There is strong support for the inclusion of fieldwork at these years of schooling as well.

We agree with this section. (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc and Geography Teachers Association of Queensland Inc)

There is a movement from geographical investigations in Year 3 and 4 to focusing on geographical involvement in Year 5 and 6, making choices. We would hope that this would translate in to the taking of action at some level at this stage. We feel there are opportunities here for the inclusion of consumer and financial literacy in the treatment of responsible choices related to the environment and would expect that these links will be made explicit in the actual Geography curriculum when it is written. This would also support the integration of Geography and Science in these years. The geographical skills are appropriate. (Australian Securities and Investments Commission and Australian Government Financial Literacy Board)

Matters for Improvement

Altogether, 24% of online respondents ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with the proposed content for this section. The main reason was that the geographical skills were too difficult:

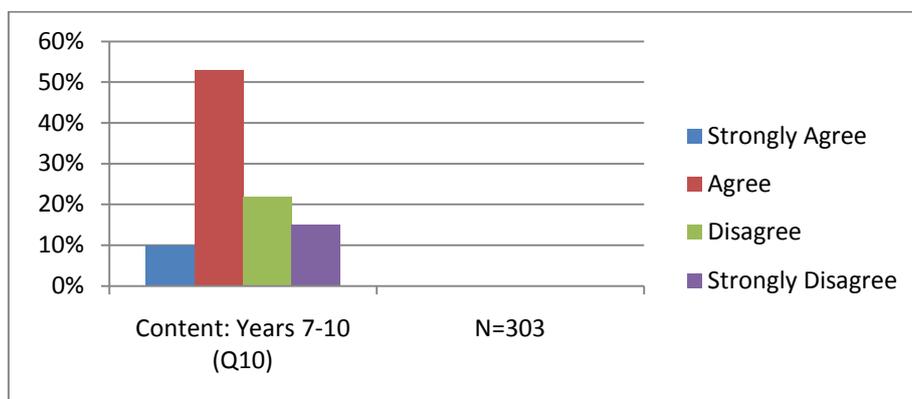
In Years 3-4, some language was considered to be too abstract and theoretical to resonate with primary teachers (Department of Education and Children’s Services, SA)

There is a need for more emphasis on spatial thinking skills in Years K-2 and 3-4, especially with new media such as Google maps. The concepts suggested at this level are very challenging. (University of Queensland)

Fieldwork needs further explanation. Some of the skills and concepts being developed in Years 3-6 appear to be very high order for this age group (NSW Board of Studies)

(vii) Content: Years 7-10

Years 7-10 seemed to be the most problematic area of the course overall according to the feedback. The Draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper presents a place, space and environment theme using comparative case studies and fieldwork at a global, national and local scale. Year 7 is the culmination of the Year 5 and 6 course due to the fact that in some areas of Australia, Year 7 is still within the primary domain or part of middle schooling rather than being a distinct beginning of secondary school.



Key Strengths

63% of online respondents indicated that they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the proposed Year 7-10 content. In particular, the skills and place studies at a variety of scales.

Years 7-10 is clear and succinct. It needs to be remembered that geography will be in competition with history for time and student selection. If it is not to be mandated in Years 9-10 then it must be engaging enough in year 8 to attract students in the non compulsory years of 9 and 10. Leave it as it is. (Department of Education and Training, WA)

In Years 8-10 we agree with the inclusion of a deeper study of selected places and countries. These place-focused studies will enable students to take a holistic view. Although by no means advocating a return to full scale regional geography, we think that the inclusion of some place studies will add an element that has been missing in recent years and will be popular with students. (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc and Geography Teachers Association of Queensland Inc)

Matters for Improvement

37% of online respondents expressed a clear dissatisfaction with the proposed content in that it appears to lack physical geography; is limited, repetitive and not challenging enough compared to the proposed Year 5-6 course; could be taught by a non-specialist trained teacher; and also has unconfirmed indicative hours. A large focus of the concern was directed towards Year 7.

The loss of so much physical geography greatly weakens the ability of geography teachers to place environmental issues in context. (There is) far too much emphasis on local area geography, particularly in Year 7. Students will find this tedious as it closes down the subject rather than opening it up. (#6 online response)

The emphasis on economic geography should be reduced in favour of a greater balance of natural geography. This would not only broaden skills and prepare students more adequately for senior years, but would engage a greater range of students, 'natural geography is closer to the core business of geography.the most distinctive aspects (of geography) are study of the interaction of humans with the natural environment and its spatial approaches to the study of place, systems and the surface of the earth' (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VIC)

Year 7 especially needs considerable work. The skills need to be more clearly aligned to other content statements. There is an overemphasis on social and economic geography and not enough on physical geography (NSW Board of Studies)

In secondary schools, the effect (of geography) would be more mixed and would depend to some extent on how many hours are allocated, as well as on the core/elective decision...the national geography curriculum should be an improvement in schools in Years 7-8. However, if a low number of hours are indicated, geography in some schools could go backwards. In Years 9 and 10 we will go from a situation where almost all students get at least some geography to a situation where a lot of students will get none at al. This situation will be aggravated if history is compulsory but geography is not...It is essential that geography be compulsory to Year 10 to meet the Melbourne Declarations' goal for education. (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc)

(Our) responses are predicated on Geography being mandated in Years K-10. If a decision is made to do otherwise the shape paper will require quite fundamental revision. The arguments in favour of mandating Geography in Years K-10 are overwhelming....Overall there is too much emphasis on the local. (Geography Teachers Association, NSW)

Year 7 is seen as a transition year but this does not overcome the issue of the focus of the curriculum. It is important to note that in some states and territories, geography teaching is sometimes weakly developed in

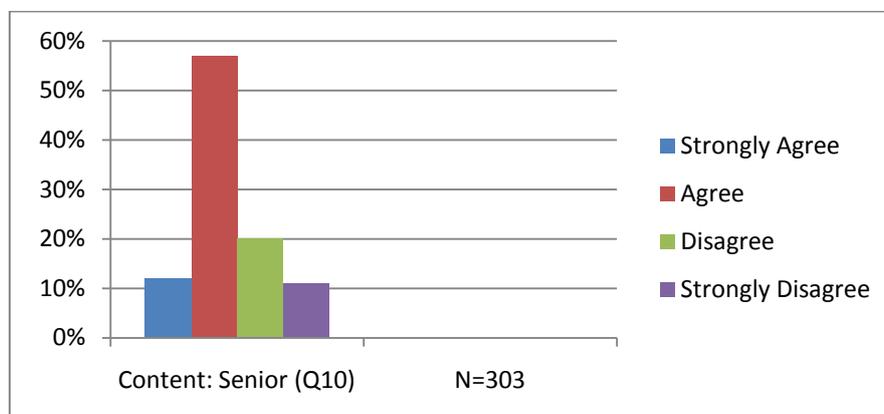
Year 7, both in primary and secondary schools...(it) will have significant resource implications and will require a degree of specialist teacher knowledge and skills and physical resources (e.g. transport for fieldwork) (Australian Primary Principals Association)

In Year 7, knowledge and understanding includes 'investigating the population and community structure of the neighbourhood'. This may be too similar to that in Years 3-4, i.e. 'investigating the population of their place'. (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc and the Geography Teachers Association of Queensland Inc)

There was considerable concern raised about the content at this level. It was seen to be too dry and not engaging for adolescents..At Year 7-9 it is critical to make the subject fully engaging and allow for connections to be made to current events..Perhaps the study of a local economy might fit more with Year 10 students who are beginning to make decisions about their future...The group wish to make a strong commitment to the compulsory study of Geography as a key element of the core learning needed for Australian students. As our knowledge of history has been seen as important so it is equally important to understand and know about our geography so that the events of history can be put in to context. (Geography Teachers Association, South Australia)

(viii) Content: Senior Secondary years

The senior secondary content has both an international and national perspective. It is comprised of 4 units over the 2 year period – an environmental focus (physical geography), an individual research focus (physical or human geography), a diversity and change focus (human geography) and a sustainability of urban and rural areas focus (combination of human and physical geography). Generally, the professional associations and government bodies, Australia-wide, who provided written feedback, were supportive of the proposal for the senior secondary years. Most of the concerns that were raised were from the online responses or individuals in relation to the individual research and the perceived emphasis on human geography.



Key Strengths

70% of online respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the proposal for the senior secondary geography course. In particular, the geographic skills and inquiry based learning.

We support the investigation (topic). Teachers who have not traditionally focused on individual investigations will need support. We fully support inquiry based learning. (Department of Education and Training, WA)

The suggested approach (for the senior secondary years) received general support. (Geography Teachers Association, NSW)

PIA is also keen to see emphasis being placed on the role of practical and project work in developing and applying knowledge and skills in addition to the strong focus placed on theoretical knowledge. This is particularly important in the senior years. It is acknowledged that the importance of fieldwork is included...PIA also endorses the focus of the senior years studies on sustainability and the future of urban and rural places which is an important basis for urban and environmental studies. (Planning Institute of Australia, ACT)

Matters for Improvement

30% of online respondents and written responses expressed concern with the senior secondary geography course and all mentioned the following reasons. Firstly, the independent study project (Unit 2), due to poor timing as students may not have sufficient geographical knowledge and experience and the question about whether there would be enough work in this project to last a term during class time. Secondly, the focus on human geography at the expense of physical geography. Thirdly, the academic orientation of the course in relation to university entrance.

There is some overlap with earth and environmental science. Removal of the physical geography component from geography risks making it a socio-ethical subject with a limited attraction to those students who love geography for its spatial focus (#25 online response)

Senior Geography course lacks a focus on physical and human geography that has the potential to be highly engaging for students. The balance between human and physical geography should be clarified and appropriately integrated in to the content. The structure is not supported and needs considerable development. The concept of geographical research is important but the proposed one semester of research and report, out of context from other content is unsuitable (NSW Board of Studies)

Stakeholders challenged the feasibility of an extended investigation for Unit 2, stating that students would need scaffolding with structured content and further building of skills. They indicated that many students would have difficulty undertaking such a sustained investigation (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VIC)

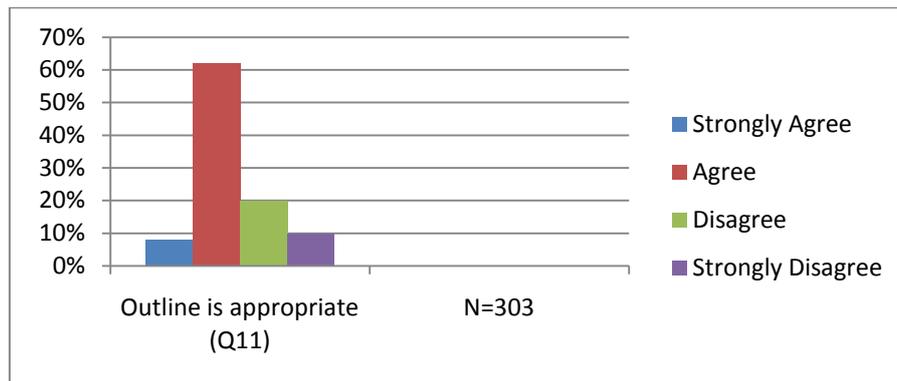
As an important learning area for careers and citizenship, geography needs to be accessible to all students in the senior years. The course described in the paper seems to be oriented to the academic and does not provide opportunities for the use of geospatial technology and other applications or practical pursuits. It should not be focused only on university entrance. (Department of Education and Childrens' Services, SA)

Reduce university concepts in school Geography (Geography teacher, NSW)

(ix) Appropriateness of content

70% of online respondents and written responses suggested that the proposed broad outline of content is appropriate. Of particular appeal was the emphasis on fieldwork, curriculum flexibility and integration with other subjects such as science, although the latter factor was also expressed as a concern as it was perceived as a loss of geography to another subject area and therefore contributing to the lack of physical geography. Other concerns raised

related to the lack of content sequencing and that the outline is too vague to construct a teaching program.



(x) Overall comments

The final question was available for respondents to comment on the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper overall or for a particular part of it. 15% of online respondents chose to make a comment. All written submissions made a summative comment. Selections of comments are provided below:

The draft curriculum includes a welcome focus on fieldwork which will further enhance the study of geography in ACT schools. Encouragement in the draft curriculum is also given to studies of patterns or processes at the local scale which will be complemented by similar studies at levels of scale up to global. (Department of Education and Training, ACT)

We like the proposed 'Place' and 'Environment' strands set out for Year 8-10. However, there is little or no mention of the physical processes of the earth, which is essential to teach if students are to understand how these systems operate. This is a serious oversight. (Social Science Faculty, NSW)

Unlike history there is no unequivocal agreement as to the place of geography in the school curriculum...succinct messages regarding the importance of geography will be required. This is particularly important in light of ACARA's current position regarding the elevation of history and consequent restriction of curriculum time that can be devoted to other humanity disciplines. (Department of Education and Training, WA)

Good conceptualisation of Geography education and a considerable improvement over the pre-draft release. (Geography teacher, NSW)

The curriculum seems to be overly influenced by human geography at the expense of physical geography, especially in relation to Years 7-9. It is important to allow students to be exposed to the physical processes transforming Earth at this age as well...The division of the course in to the broad themes of geographical skills and knowledge is very good and reinforces the range of opportunities that Geography provides. I strongly

agree with the proposed course for the senior years and consider it to be an appropriate subject of students of this age. I am very pleased to see the inclusion of an independent area of study that allows students to engage deeply with the discipline. This also reinforces the vocational aspects of the course and is to be commended. (#17 online response)

In primary schools, we would expect that the national geography curriculum, if properly resourced, will certainly improve the teaching and learning of geography. (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc)

Conclusion

Overall, the major strengths identified through the consultation were:

- rationale (the way it explains geography and its purpose)
- inquiry based learning and fieldwork (fundamental to best practice and engaging geography)
- content: F-2, Years 3-4 (geographical skills, content and its progression is most appropriate and interesting to both teachers and students)
- curriculum flexibility for case studies F-12

In summary, the key areas for improvement were:

- terminology (unclear, vague and used inconsistently e.g. environment, indigenous, Asia)
- content: Years 7-10, senior secondary years (inappropriate, boring and unengaging. Unit 2 is inappropriate as a school based unit)
- citizenship (strengthen the language used and explicitness of active citizenship)
- organisation (present course as knowledge and understanding, inquiry and geographic skills, instead of place, space and environment)
- over emphasis on human geography as compared to physical geography (unbalanced)
- over prescriptive in setting the context for learning (e.g. Canberra fieldwork and the list of countries important to Australia)
- elective or mandatory after Year 8 (arose in the Year 7-10 feedback and was a qualifier for the professional association's feedback in that their feedback was given on the assumption that geography was mandatory F-10).

Overall, a greater number of 'individuals responses were recorded for the online survey in comparison to 'organisational responses'. On a combined basis, for questions 6-15 on the online survey, 'agree' and 'strongly agree' were the most chosen responses (63%-80%) compared to the combined 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' (14%-36%) response. State and Territory curriculum authorities and organisations were the largest contributors of written responses sent directly to ACARA. Whilst the content areas for Years 7-10 and senior secondary year received the greatest proportion of negative feedback from both the written responses and the online survey results compared to other sections of the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper, it can be deduced that as a whole, the prior

mentioned paper was well received by the stakeholders of Geography and that the feedback provided by these stakeholders to ACARA was mostly constructive and detailed.

In general we agree that the Shape Paper provides a sound basis to guide the writing of the geography curriculum. With revision, it should result in a curriculum that will make a unique and substantial contribution to meeting the educational goals of the Melbourne Declaration, particularly in regard to sustainability and responsible global and local citizenship. All students in the compulsory years of schooling need to study geography as part of a broad general education to properly meet those goals. (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc and Geography Teachers Association of Queensland Inc)

Questions from the online survey.

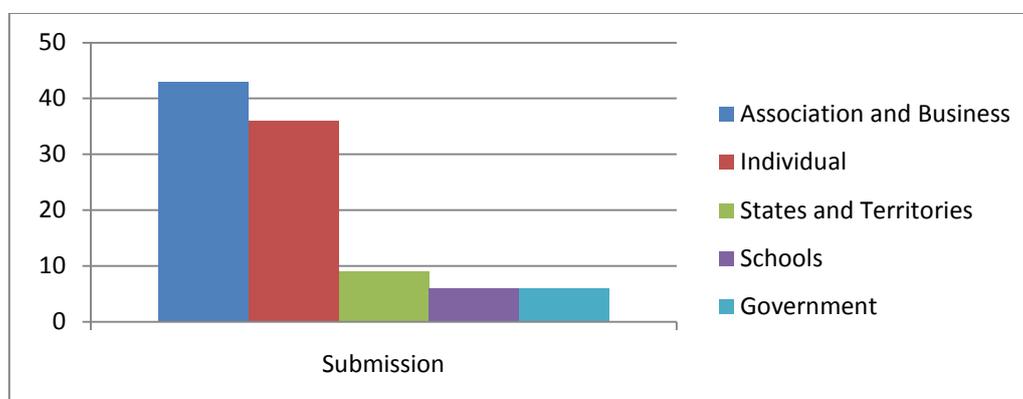
Q1-5 were identification questions

From Q6 onwards, the respondents could choose from 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree':

1. Please indicate whether your survey is an Individual or an Organisation submission.
2. Individual's detail (e.g. name, address)
3. Profile (e.g. teacher, parent)
4. What state/territory do you live in?
5. Organisation submission (e.g. name of organisation, number of people)
6. The rationale provides a coherent explanation for the contribution of geography to the education of students
7. The definition provides a clear direction for geography as a school subject
8. An appropriate emphasis can be seen in the stated contribution of geography to the development of the cross curriculum dimensions and the general capabilities
9. The proposed organisation of the curriculum around the two strands of geographical knowledge and understanding, and, geographical inquiry and skills, makes sense and will stand the test of time
10. The description of how learning in geography is organised (i.e. how the strands are integrated through inquiry based learning) is clear.
 - F-2
 - Years 3-6
 - Years 7-10
 - Senior secondary years
11. The proposed broad outline of content is appropriate
12. Any overall comments

Breakdown of written respondents

There were 37 written submissions received and analysed for this report.



State and Territory Curriculum Authorities

Department of Education and Children’s Services, South Australia

Department of Education and Training, Australian Capital Territory

Department of Education and Training, Tasmania

Department of Education and Training, Western Australia

NSW Board of Studies, with and on behalf of NSW Department of Education and Training and a Geography Reference and Teacher Group, New South Wales

Queensland Studies Authority, Education Queensland, Queensland Catholic Education Commission and Independent Schools Queensland (joint submission)

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, in partnership, with and on behalf of DEECD, AISV, CECV, Victoria

Other Authorities

Associated Christian Schools

Brisbane Catholic Education Office

Catholic Education, South Australia

Associations and Businesses

Animals Ethics Education Reference Group

Asia Education Foundation

Asia Education Teachers Association

Australian Geography Teachers Association

Australian Primary Principals Association

Baddeley, Tom representing Western Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration

Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia, PLAN, SurfAid International, UNICEF and World Vision Australia (joint submission)

Catholic Primary Principals’ Association of Western Australia

Geography Teachers Association of Queensland and the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland

Geography Teachers Association of New South Wales

Geography Teachers Association of South Australia

Geography Teachers Association of Victoria

Planning Institute of Australia

The Spatial Information Council (ANZLIC)

Schools

Carlingford High School, Social Science Faculty, New South Wales

Woodcroft College Anglican day school, South Australia

Government

Australian Securities and Investment Commission

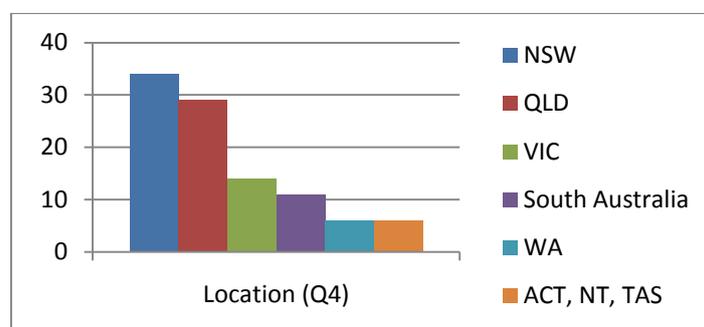
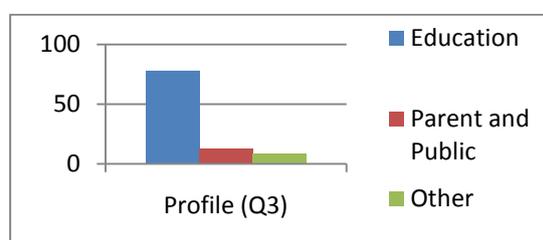
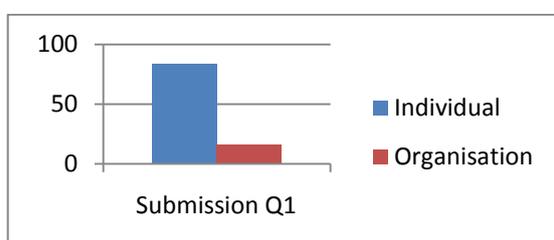
Individuals

10 responses

Breakdown of online respondents

There were 690 online survey responses that were submitted and analysed for this report.

Altogether, 78% of surveys were submitted by teachers, academics, school leaders and curriculum authorities. The remaining 22% were submitted by parents, the public and those who identified themselves as 'other'.



**Key Actions taken in response to the
Key Findings of the Consultation Feedback Report
Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum:
Geography paper**

Executive Summary

The consultation report based on the feedback received about the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography paper revealed the following key findings;

Key Strengths

- rationale (the way it explains geography and its purpose)
- inquiry based learning and fieldwork (fundamental to best practice and engaging geography)
- content: F-2, Years 3-4 (geographical skills, content and its progression is most appropriate and interesting to both teachers and students)
- curriculum flexibility for case studies F-12.

Matters for Improvement

- terminology (unclear, vague and used inconsistently)
- citizenship (strengthen the language used and explicitness of active citizenship)
- content: years 7-10, senior secondary years (inappropriate, boring and unengaging)
- organisation (present course as knowledge and understanding, inquiry and geographic skills instead of place, space and environment)
- over emphasis on human geography as compared to physical geography (unbalanced)
- over prescriptive in setting the context for learning (e.g. Canberra fieldwork and the list of countries important to Australia)
- elective or mandatory after Year 8 (arose in the Year 7-10 feedback and was a qualifier for the professional association's feedback in that their feedback was given on the assumption that geography was mandatory F-10).

Key Actions taken in response to the Key Findings

(1) Terminology in the Rationale

Response to Feedback: It would seem that the footnote has been included for clarity but it has unfortunately caused confusion amongst the respondents. Environment has always been a flexible term with a variety of meanings that are no different to what is stated in the footnote. To refer to a 'built' environment instead of 'human' is geographically acceptable and in wide practice. Environments can be studied as the separate and distinct entities of a biophysical or a built phenomenon (as indicated) but at any point in time a biophysical environment is affected to some extent by human society. It appears that 'environment' is used to refer to the integration, interdependence and interrelationships between the biophysical and built environments so that this has become a third way of investigating an area to be studied.

Key Action taken: Rewrite and simplify the definition of 'environment' to reflect the definition provided by Science throughout Years K-6 and then extend in to a more explicit geographical definition throughout Years 7-12.

(2) Citizenship (strengthen the language and explicitness of active citizenship)

Response to the Feedback: Citizenship is fundamental to the success of the general capabilities in geography and whilst not necessarily explicit, it is embedded particularly within creativity, thinking skills, ethical behaviour, self management and teamwork.

Key Action taken: Citizenship will be more explicitly written in the content areas K-12 for the revised Shape paper and then in to the writing of the curriculum.

(3) **Content: Years 7-10 and Senior Secondary Years (inappropriate, boring, unengaging. Unit 2 is unsuitable)**

(4) **Over emphasis on Human Geography as compared to Physical Geography**

Content: 7-10

Response to Feedback: It should be noted that point 64 states 'It (geography) should be suitable for jurisdictions where Year 7 is the last year or primary school rather than the first year of secondary school. The structure of Year 7 recognises its role as a year of transition from primary to secondary education. Much (of the course) is a way of engaging students in geographical thinking and therefore may not be taught by a specialist teacher. This is a qualifying statement for the purpose of what Year 7 can be around the country. In relation to the proposed Year 7 content, it is specific to human geography but it is at the 'end' of the Year 5-6 course which does have physical geography component. The transitory nature of Year 7 needs to be considered. It is intended that there will be specific and separate writers who will be employed for the development of the Year 7 curriculum (point 58)

Key Action taken: Remove the statement about 'geography could be taught by a non-specialist teacher' (point 64). Rewrite the content to be more distinctly representative of the physical and human geography focuses. Integrate and embed inquiry based learning and fieldwork throughout each topic. The teacher can decide on the format this takes.

Revision of content for the Years 7-10

Physical and Human geography focuses are equally represented and sequential. Scales of learning are integrated throughout each topic (global, national, local). Inquiry based learning and fieldwork are also integrated throughout each topic (at the discretion of the teacher in relation to group-work, class-work, individual projects). Geographic skills will be specified.

Year 7

Water, rainfall and climate (physical geography focus, complements Science)

People, mobility and culture (human geography focus, complements History)

Year 8

Biomes (physical geography focus, complements science)

Population, distribution and settlement (human geography focus, complements history)

Year 9

Minerals, energy and landscapes (physical geography focus)

Economies, transport and communications (human geography focus)

Year 10

Sustainability (physical geography focus)

Human well-being and sustainability (human geography focus)

Each topic could be taught through a combination of local, national or global scales . The 'water' and 'biomes' unit particularly reflects the Year of Learning for Sustainability approach and links in well to the proposed national curriculum for Science in Year 7 and 8. School or community based environment committees, agricultural areas and eco-gardens can be used as a reference to each physical geography focused topic.

Content: Senior Secondary years

Response to Feedback: The issues raised about the field work stand alone unit and the lack of balance between human and physical geography focus areas were valid.

Key Action taken: Integrate and embed inquiry based learning and fieldwork throughout each topic rather than have as a separate topic (as in Unit 2). The teacher can decide whether this form of learning is done on a class, small group or individual basis. Readjust the topics in to 2 core and 2 investigative studies so that there are still 4 units which are sequential and equally representative of the physical and human geography focuses.

Revision of content for the Senior Secondary Years

The following are the main topics that would be suitable for Years 11 and 12 interchangeably.

Core Units; Units 1, 3

(major processes changing the geography of the world at all scales; local, national, global)

Unit 1 – Recovering the Earth. Land surface transformation includes vegetation clearance, deforestation and urban development

Unit 3 – Reshaping the World. This would include studies of the changing spatial structure of the global economy, population movements, global resource consumption and the environmental consequences, global inequalities, cultural diversity and localism. A theme might be whether the trend of increasing globalisation can be sustained in a world faced with higher energy prices and threats from climate change.

(Physical and Human Geography focus areas are separate topics and morph in to each other)

Investigative Studies; Units 2, 4

(sequential extension of the physical and human core topics)

Unit 2 – People in places and spaces covering options such as:

- **sustaining places.** This could include studies of regional and non-regional urban growth and decline, urbanisation, the processes of rural change, environmental sustainability, urban and rural economic and social issues, urban planning and management, community sustainability and also ways of creating resilient places. Schools could choose to focus on large cities or on regional and rural places or a combination of both
- **the geography of economic activity**
- **development geography**
- **population geography**
- **culture and geography**
- **tourism and its future**
- **political geography**

Unit 4 – Dynamic environments covering options such as:

- **managing environmental risks (with topics such as natural hazards, human health and environmental collapse)**
- **sustaining environmental resources (including energy, water, biodiversity, soils and oceans)**
- **physical geography and management of a selected type of environment**
- **the dynamics and management of landscapes**
- **environmental change**

A possible structure could be;

- (a) Year 11 – Unit 1 plus Unit 2 taught through options
- (b) Year 12 – Unit 3 plus Unit 4 taught through options

(5) Over prescriptive in setting the context for learning

Response to the Feedback: Point 53 states that ‘the curriculum should generally avoid prescribing specific case studies that all students must do’. **Suggestions** are made as to the countries or areas to be studied but it is also stated within this point that ‘Teachers could also choose case studies that are good illustrations of the phenomena or principles they are teaching, or that have similar characteristics to the location of the school, or that are the product of relationships the school may have been able to develop with other schools. It could be that the Draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography* paper has been misinterpreted by the respondents.

Key Action taken: Clarify at National Panel Meeting, Wednesday 13th October 2010.

(6) Organisation and presentation of content F-12

Response to the Feedback: The raised issue of clarity with the organisation is valid for both writers and teachers.

Key Action taken: To restructure the presentation of content in to a two strand approach; knowledge and understanding and inquiry and skills, as suggested below, for the revised Shape paper and also the curriculum.

Revision of layout for the Years K-12 Shaping Paper

The proposed science and history curriculums are set out in a format very similar to that shown below. This is a clear layout for teachers to follow in relation to teaching the required content and developing their teaching and learning programs.

Instead of the ‘place, environment and space’ format that the draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography paper was written in, can geography now have a revised shaping paper presented in the format below that appears to be more uniform and link in better with other subjects, particularly science and history.

Knowledge and Understanding	Geographical Inquiry and Skills