

Monitoring the effectiveness of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum 2016



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1. Executive summary

ACARA summarises stakeholder feedback on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in a report titled *Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum*. This report reflects an annual process of collecting and synthesising information that will inform curriculum renewal. The report for the 2015-16 monitoring cycle is provided here.

Since 2009, the staged release of the three-dimensional Australian Curriculum has brought new opportunities and challenges to all who have an interest in school education in the 21st century. This third ACARA monitoring report marks a transition from a lengthy period of curriculum development and implementation to a period of curriculum stability. It must be noted that throughout the monitoring cycle of 2015–16, work on the Australian Curriculum: Languages has contributed to the final stages of planned curriculum development in the eight learning areas for Foundation – Year 10.

As foreshadowed in the 2014 and 2015 monitoring reports, states and territories have commenced a period of curriculum stability that provides an opportunity for teachers and schools to implement programs that meet the needs of their students and will enable teachers, schools and systems to draw meaningful conclusions about the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum. On request, ACARA collaborates with school authorities to implement the Australian Curriculum, engaging with educators, professional associations, parent groups and a range of other private and public organisations in their efforts to improve the learning of all young Australians.

ACARA's work includes the collection and publication of examples of students' work that exemplify the achievement standards. Such collaboration also includes filming illustrations of practice that allow schools and teachers to share their strategies for innovative and effective teaching and learning in the varied educational settings in which the Australian Curriculum is being implemented.

Finally, this period of stability is also marked by ACARA's commitment to a four-year program of national and international research that will inform future iterations of the Australian Curriculum.

The 2016 monitoring report contains feedback collected between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. Responses were received from school and curriculum authorities as well as professional associations. Respondents were asked to place a particular emphasis on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum's achievement standards and general capabilities.

Feedback suggests broad satisfaction with the Australian Curriculum, including these two specific elements, although it is clear that there is a desire for more time to implement the curriculum before definitive conclusions can be drawn. This is directly associated with the strong call for support from ACARA to assist teacher understanding of the ways in which the achievement standards can be used in assessing and reporting students' learning. Concerns were raised in relation to consistency of the achievement standards within and between learning areas. There was a call for some revision of the achievement standards to provide greater clarity of pitch and precision, as this would reduce the perceived density and volume of these statements.

To a lesser extent, the responses indicated that teachers need guidance in the explicit teaching and assessing of the Australian Curriculum’s general capabilities. There is considerable enthusiasm for their use, but teachers lack confidence in their capacity to embed the capabilities in their planning.

Suggestions for improvements to the technical and design aspects of the Australian Curriculum website, together with feedback on the Australian Curriculum itself, have been provided by all respondents. Issues raised by jurisdictions and other interest groups as part of the 2015–16 monitoring cycle are also addressed in the sections dealing with the Australian Curriculum’s learning areas.

Key issues and requests for advice and support arising from the 2016 monitoring process and responses:

Issue/request	Response
Consistency and clarity of achievement standards	During this period of curriculum stability, a key focus of ACARA’s work, as described in the work plan, is to provide expertise and advice to stakeholders, on request, to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum.
Support for appropriately sequenced and embedded teaching and learning of general capabilities	Specific support in relation to achievement standards will be provided throughout 2017. ACARA will continue to publish illustrations of practice and work samples across learning areas to enhance access for a range of learners and to illustrate a variety of assessment strategies and standards of student work. In 2017, specific examples will include the development of illustrations of practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; further exemplars in relation to mathematics proficiencies; work samples in additional subjects within the HaSS learning area and in five languages.
Functionality and ease of use of the Australian Curriculum website	The Australian Curriculum website is undergoing redevelopment in the first half of 2017. This work includes consideration of user feedback from the 2015–16 monitoring report, user surveys and interviews.

2. Background

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum paper, first approved by the council of Commonwealth and state and territory education ministers in 2009, guides the development of the Australian Curriculum. This paper reflects the position adopted by ministers collectively in their 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The most recent version of the Shape of the Australian Curriculum v4.0 was approved by the ACARA Board in late 2012, reflecting the evolving processes used in the development of the Australian Curriculum.

The process of curriculum development involves four interrelated phases: shaping, writing, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Over the past seven years, curriculum has been developed in eight learning areas for Foundation – Year 10. Curriculum development in the final learning area, Australian Curriculum: Languages, will be completed in 2016.

Australia's federal system of government allocates responsibility for the delivery of school education to the states and territories. Therefore, each jurisdiction's curriculum and school authorities have determined the pace and nature of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Decisions are made in each jurisdiction in relation to changing any existing curricula, ensuring the readiness of teachers, schools and systems, making resources and other support available and engaging constructively with ACARA. These decisions differ across states and territories and will inevitably have an impact on the effectiveness of the curriculum.

The annual monitoring process is described in the paper noted in 2013 by Education Council: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Australian Curriculum.

For the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, all states and territories were invited to provide specific feedback on the Australian Curriculum's achievement standards and general capabilities. With the completion of curriculum in the eight learning areas in 2016, states and territories have been in an increasingly strong position to reflect on the three-dimensional nature of the Australian Curriculum. For many stakeholders, this monitoring cycle has marked the beginning of a sustained period of curriculum stability.

3. Methodology

The 2016 Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum report summarises feedback from states and territories that reflects the monitoring cycle of 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016. The main sources of feedback are curriculum and school authorities, professional associations and parent organisations. Other sources of information relevant to this period are noted below.

ACARA's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Robert Randall, wrote to key stakeholders in April 2016 to invite participation in the 2016 monitoring process. Comment was requested on any aspect of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum, with consideration of the pitch, structure and validity of the Australian Curriculum's achievement standards and the quality and validity of the general capabilities.

Seventeen submissions were received, fourteen from curriculum and school authorities and three from professional bodies. The list is provided in appendices A and B.

In addition to this stakeholder feedback, the 2016 monitoring report was informed by:

- a user survey (see section 6d) relating to the use of the Australian Curriculum website
- a quantitative analysis of website usage via Google Analytics (see section 6c)
- a qualitative analysis of user satisfaction via a sample of stakeholder interviews (see section 6d)
- consideration of the queries received through ACARA’s media channels such as info@acara as well as emails and telephone calls

4. Monitoring the effectiveness of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum 2015

a. Findings

The 2015 monitoring report noted the following key findings:

- The overall quality of the content was considered to be above satisfactory.
- The usability and functionality of the website were regarded as above satisfactory, but some aspects of functionality and navigation require attention.
- The pages showing the Australian Curriculum’s learning areas of English, Mathematics, History and Science received the greatest number of visits, and the number of visits per page across the entire Australian Curriculum was greater than in the previous year.
- Partners expressed the desire for greater communication and consultation regarding improvements to the website.

The 2015 monitoring report reported on the results of an online survey about the Australian Curriculum website, which included questions from the Brooke System Usability Scale (Brooke, J 1986, *System Usability Scale: A quick and dirty usability scale*). The survey attracted 192 responses; the respondents rated the Australian Curriculum website at 66.7 (between ‘ok’ and ‘good’).

The following table indicates the major issues identified by respondents in relation to the use of the Australian Curriculum website during the 2014–15 monitoring cycle.

b. Australian Curriculum website – issues and responses

Issue	Response
Presentation of threads and general capabilities in all subjects requires review with respect to consistent coding and subheadings	A project to redevelop the Australian Curriculum website is underway. This will enable the delivery of the Australian Curriculum via an in-

Issue	Response
Consultation should continue in relation to the presentation, usability and functionality of the website (including downloading and printing)	house platform that is contemporary and flexible in both design and usability. Phase 1 of the project (2016–17) will address:
Additional information is required to support the use of the Australian Curriculum website, including Scootle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation • functionality • usability • navigability.
A visual or graphic roadmap of the Australian Curriculum website would be helpful	An annual survey allows ongoing monitoring of the Australian Curriculum website (see section 6d for the 2016 survey).
Access to the Australian Curriculum relies on high-speed internet connection.	Internet access is outside the scope of ACARA's responsibility. Printing the Australian Curriculum remains an option.

5. Overview of jurisdictional implementation of the Australian Curriculum (30 June 2016)

During the monitoring period of 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016, three versions of the Australian Curriculum website were released: version 8.0 on 18 October 2015, version 8.1 on 16 December 2015 and version 8.2 (the current version) on 30 June 2016. Jurisdictional uptake of versions has been varied, as indicated in section 5. Access to version 7.5 will remain until the end of 2016.

Overview – jurisdictional implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) F–10

Learning area	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales	Northern Territory	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia	Queensland
English	Implemented in full in 2014	AC content is delivered via the BOSTES curriculum website. K–10 syllabuses have significantly more content than the AC	Implemented in full in 2014	Implemented in DECD schools R–8 2013; Yr 9 2014, Yr 10 2015 Implemented in full in 2014 in Catholic schools	Implemented in full in 2014 in government and Catholic and independent schools	Government and Catholic schools use AusVELS for curriculum planning and assessment purposes, which includes the AC: English	Implemented in full in 2014	Implemented in full by 2014 DET schools to implement Version 8.2 by the end of 2020
Mathematics	Implemented in full in 2014	AC content is delivered via the BOSTES curriculum website. K–10 syllabuses have significantly more content than the AC	Version 7.5 and 8.2 during 2016 and version 8.2 only in 2017	Implemented in DECD schools by end of 2013 Version 8.2 implemented in full in 2016	Implemented in full in 2012	K–10 syllabuses have significantly more content than the AC, including algorithmic thinking and sets	Implemented in full in 2015	Implemented in full by 2014 DET schools to implement Version 8.2 by the end of 2020
Science	Implemented in full in 2014	No significant differences in expectations. Science is integrated with Technology for Foundation – Year 6	Version 7.5 and 8.2 during 2016 and version 8.2 only in 2017	Implemented in DECD schools by end of 2013 Version 8.2 implemented in full in 2016	Version 8.2 implemented in full in 2016	Version 7.5 implemented in full. Minor differences in presentation of content only (two-year bands)	Version 8.1 implemented in full by end of 2016	Implemented in full by 2015 DET schools to implement version 8.2 by the end of 2020

Overview – jurisdictional implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) F–10

Learning area	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales	Northern Territory	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia	Queensland
Humanities and Social Sciences	Version 7.5 Implemented in full in 2014. Version 8.2 implemented by the end of 2016	F–10 History and F–10 Geography delivered via BOSTES website No confirmed timelines for Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business	Version 7.5 and 8.2 during 2016 and version 8.2 only in 2017	History – implemented in DECD schools R–8 2013; Yr 9 2014, Yr 10 2015 Geography, Economics and Business, Civics and Citizenship – implemented in DECD schools 2015 Primary DECD schools – HaSS version 8.2 in 2017	Government schools’ implementation of version 8.2 by 2017 for primary HASS, History and Geography, Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business	Implementing Victorian Curriculum in 2017 (based on AC Version 7.5)	Full implementation of WA curriculum, which combines the four disciplines of Humanities and Social Sciences at the beginning of 2017	DET schools – History implemented 2013, Geography 2014, Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business from 2017; version 8.2 by the end of 2020 Independent Schools Queensland will implement Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business, at own pace
Health and Physical Education	2016 consolidation and implementation 2017 consolidation and reporting 2018 becomes core	No confirmed timelines. Writing draft syllabus 2017	2016 – full implementation – some schools using v7.5 and some v 8.2 2017 schools will use v 8.2	Implemented in DECD schools for Years 8-10- by end of 2015 R–7 by end of 2016	All schools implemented AC F–10 from 2015	Implementing Victorian Curriculum in 2017 (based on AC version 7.5)	Full implementation of WA curriculum by June 2017 (teaching assessing and reporting by end Semester 1)	DET schools to implement version 8.2 by the end of 2020

Overview – jurisdictional implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) F–10

Learning area	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales	Northern Territory	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia	Queensland
							WA has split HPE into two subjects	<p>Cairns Diocese is implementing the AC 7–10 in 2017</p> <p>Brisbane Diocese is implementing by end 2016</p> <p>Independent Schools Queensland will implement at own pace</p>
The Arts	Implemented V7.5 and is transitioning to V.8.0 in the Arts by the end of 2016	Creative Arts is an Australian Curriculum Phase 2 learning area. Schools will continue to teach the existing NSW K–6 Creative Arts Syllabus and Creative Arts Years 7–10 syllabuses until new NSW Creative Arts K–10 syllabuses	Implementing V8.0 by the end of 2016	<p>Implemented in DECD schools by end 2015</p> <p>Implementing V8.0 by the end of 2016</p>	<p>Government schools implementing V8.2 by the end of 2018 for secondary schools</p> <p>Primary schools commence implementation from 2019</p>	Currently implementing the new Victorian curriculum, which incorporates the Australian Curriculum	Implementing through WA syllabus by 2018	<p>DET schools to implement from 2017 with version 8.2 by the end of 2020</p> <p>Independent Schools Queensland will implement at own pace</p>

Overview – jurisdictional implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) F–10

Learning area	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales	Northern Territory	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia	Queensland
		for the Australian Curriculum are developed						
Technologies	Optional implementation in 2016 and reporting in 2018	Consultation on draft writing briefs to incorporate the AC in NSW syllabuses is complete. Syllabus revisions are underway. Anticipated implementation in 2018	Version 7.5 and 8.2 during 2016, and version 8.2 only in 2017	Implemented in DECD schools: primary by end of 2016, secondary by end of 2015 Implementation of v.8.2 in 2016	Implementation v.8.2 in 2016 (Catholic for DT), government schools trialling implementing in secondary schools in 2017; and primary schools implementing by 2018	Implementation of v8.2 in 2016	Familiarisation from 2015 and full implementation by 2018 (reporting Semester 1) Curriculum has been developed into year-level syllabus	DET schools to implement from 2017; with version 8.2 by the end of 2020 Independent Schools Queensland will implement at own pace
Languages	Implementation in 2017	NSW Languages K–10 Framework published June 2016 Syllabuses being developed for Chinese and Japanese	Implemented in 2016	Implemented in DECD schools by end of 2016 Full implementation by the end of 2017	Government schools plan to implement from 2019	Implementing Victorian curriculum in 2017	Made available in June 2016 for implementation with Year 3 students in 2016, Year 4 students in 2017, etc. with implementation completed by 2023 (Year 8)	DET schools to implement from 2017; with version 8.2 by the end of 2020 Independent Schools Queensland will implement at own pace

Overview – jurisdictional implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) F–10

Learning area	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales	Northern Territory	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia	Queensland
General capabilities	Implemented	Embedded in syllabus documents	Version 7.5 and 8.2 during 2016 and version 8.2 only in 2017	Implemented as part of learning areas	Government schools implemented as part of learning areas	Have written achievement Standards and syllabus documents for PSC, EU, ICU, CCT	Implemented as assessed where evident in the WA syllabus	Implemented as part of learning areas
Cross-curriculum priorities	Implemented as part of learning areas	Implemented when English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography implemented – on a rolling program from 2014 to 2017	Version 7.5 and 8.2 during 2016 and version 8.2 only in 2017	Implemented as part of learning areas	Government schools implemented as part of learning areas	Implemented as part of learning areas	Implemented as part of learning areas	Implemented as part of learning areas

6. The use of the Australian Curriculum website (2015–16)

a. Overview

During 2015, ACARA reviewed and revised the presentation of the Australian Curriculum website. Visitors to the website have had the option of using version 7.5 or version 8.2, with the former to be phased out by the mid-2017 to coincide with the introduction of the redeveloped Australian Curriculum website. A project to redevelop the Australian Curriculum website is underway, and planning has been informed by stakeholder feedback from previous monitoring reports. This project will enable the delivery of the Australian Curriculum via an in-house platform that is contemporary and flexible in both design and usability.

As the Australian Curriculum is delivered only in electronic format, ACARA is mindful of the importance of constant monitoring of the website's usability and functionality. The following strategies have been used to collect specific feedback:

- analysis of stakeholder usage (see section 6c)
- annual user survey (see section 6d)
- interviews with a sample of users (see section 6d).

b. Key findings

There is evidence of general satisfaction with the Australian Curriculum website. Issues and concerns raised in previous years have been addressed, with actions identified in the 2015 monitoring report subsequently completed, including a more streamlined presentation of the Australian Curriculum on the website and the production of additional resources to support teachers.

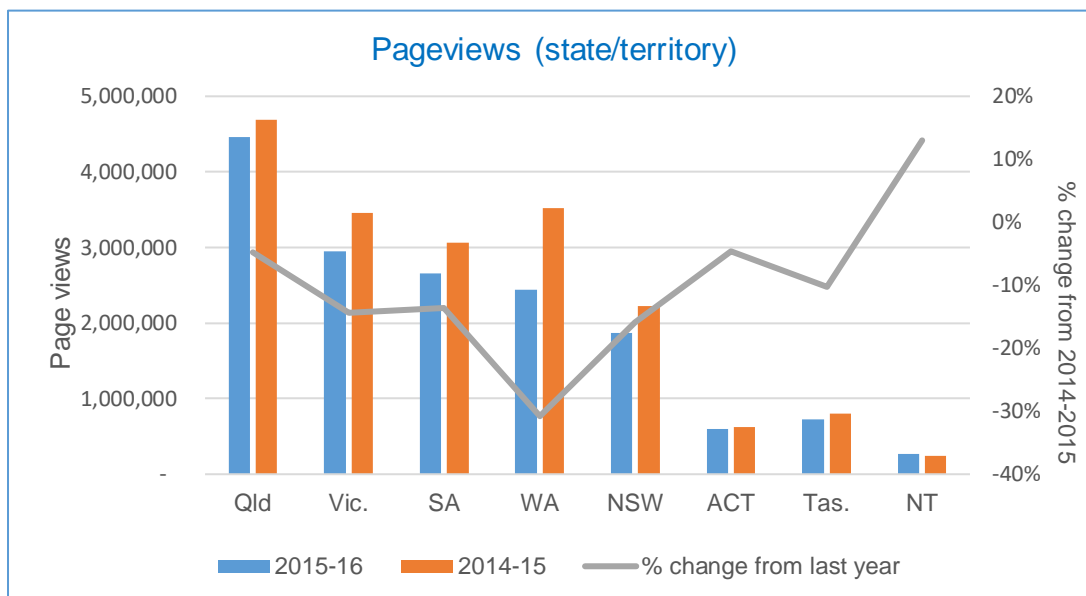
c. Analysis of website usage

Usage of the Australian Curriculum website for this monitoring cycle was approximately 16 per cent lower than in the previous monitoring cycle. This is attributed to growing familiarity with the site as jurisdictions implement the Australian Curriculum. Curriculum staff provide ongoing support for jurisdictions by telephone, email and in person. Anecdotal evidence also indicates general satisfaction with the usability and functionality of the pages and sections that are accessed most frequently by teachers.

d. Demographics

State and territory usage of the website was similar to that recorded in the 2014–15 monitoring cycle, with the exception of two jurisdictions: Western Australia (30 per cent decline, most likely to be a consequence of the development of their own curriculum website) and the Northern Territory (13 per cent increase). Queensland recorded significantly higher usage than any other state or territory.

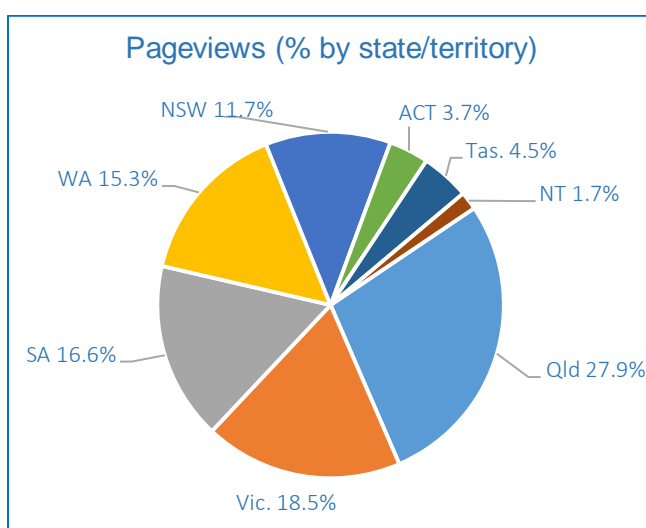
Graph 1 – Pageviews (state/territory)



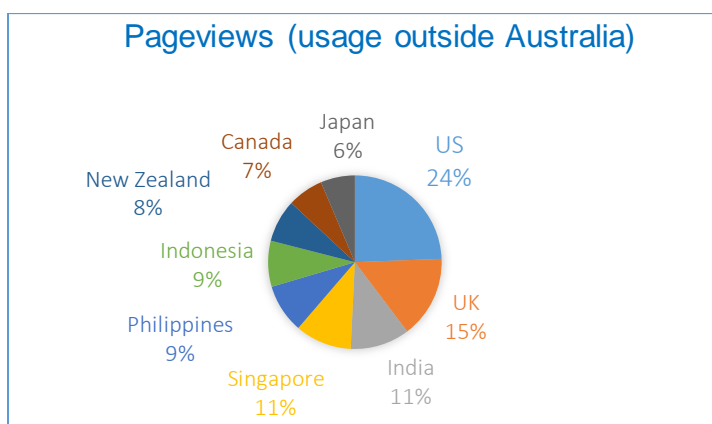
The average time spent per session by state/territory users varied between 3 and 4.3 minutes, Tasmania having the highest at 4.3 minutes and NSW the lowest at 3 minutes. In addition, the bounce rate (the percentage of visitors who enter the site and then leave without viewing additional pages) was the lowest for Tasmania at 25.6 per cent and the highest for NSW at 43.1 per cent.

At 97 per cent, Australia-based users were the main group seeking access to the Australian Curriculum website. Users from locations outside Australia were largely from the English-speaking world, followed by Asia.

Graph 2 – Pageviews (within Australia)



Graph 3 – Pageviews (usage outside Australia)

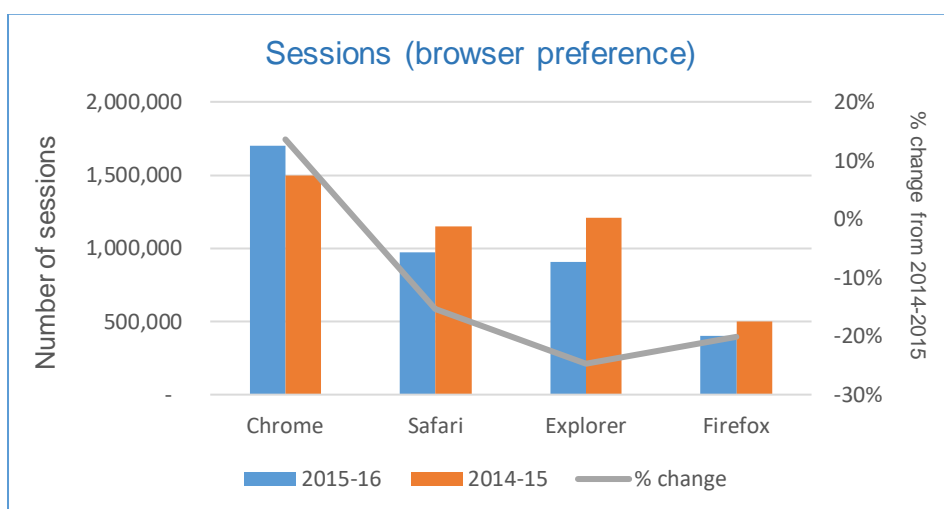


The majority of users continue to be returning visitors. New users represented 30.6 per cent of total users for this monitoring cycle, versus 32.6 per cent last year.

Browser usage showed a large swing towards Chrome in this current monitoring year, up over 13 per cent compared to decreases for the other major browsers. There is no evidence that browser choice has impacted usage of the Australian Curriculum website, so it is assumed that this increase reflects general user preference. This preference is also noted in the user survey results in section 6d.

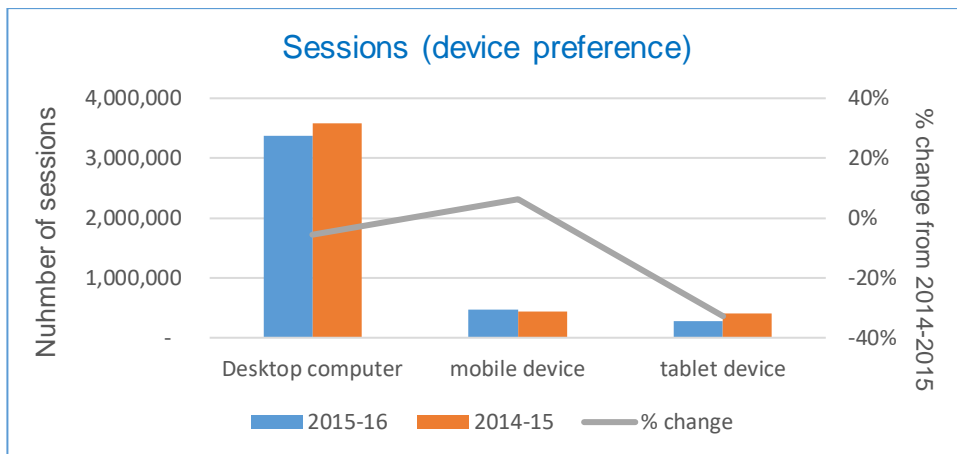
Browser preference will be a consideration in future years to ensure that accessibility is not impacted by browser choice. As sessions are a better measurement unit for browser and device use than pageviews, these data are also provided here.

Graph 4 – Sessions (browser preference)



Desktop and laptops computers remain the preferred device used to access the Australian Curriculum website, with 82 per cent of users reporting this. Mobile devices have registered a small increase since the last monitoring cycle. Ensuring ease of access for mobile devices will be part of the website redevelopment project.

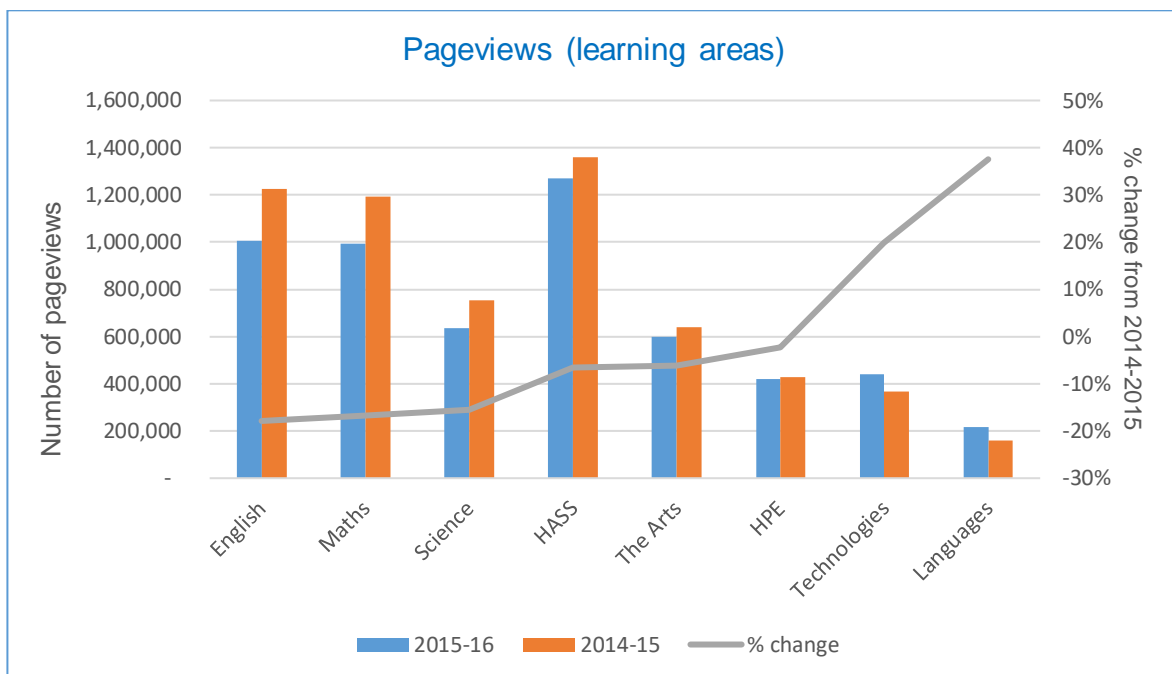
Graph 5 – Sessions (device preference)



Pageviews (learning areas)

User data suggest some correlation between the recency of publication of learning area pages and an increase in the number of users visiting those pages. For example, the highest increase in views during this monitoring cycle was for the Australian Curriculum: Languages, the last of the eight learning areas to be completed. The Humanities and Social Science (HASS) pages continue to be viewed most frequently, which may reflect the breadth of this learning area at both primary and secondary levels.

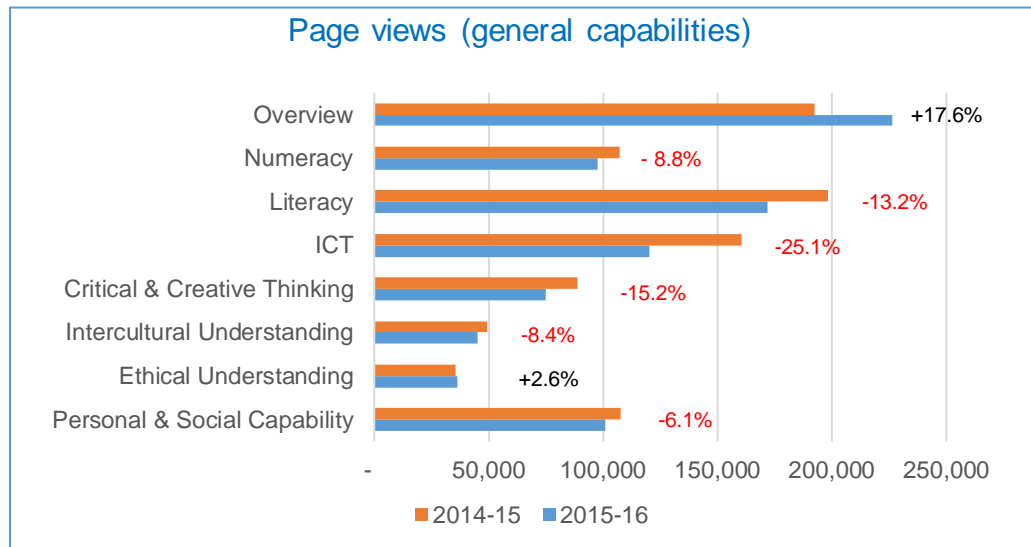
Graph 6 – Pageviews (learning areas)



Pageviews (general capabilities)

The data around pageviews for the Australian Curriculum: general capabilities showed that the Overview and Ethical Understanding pages saw increases in usage from previous years. The pages for all other capabilities recorded a decrease in the number of visits.

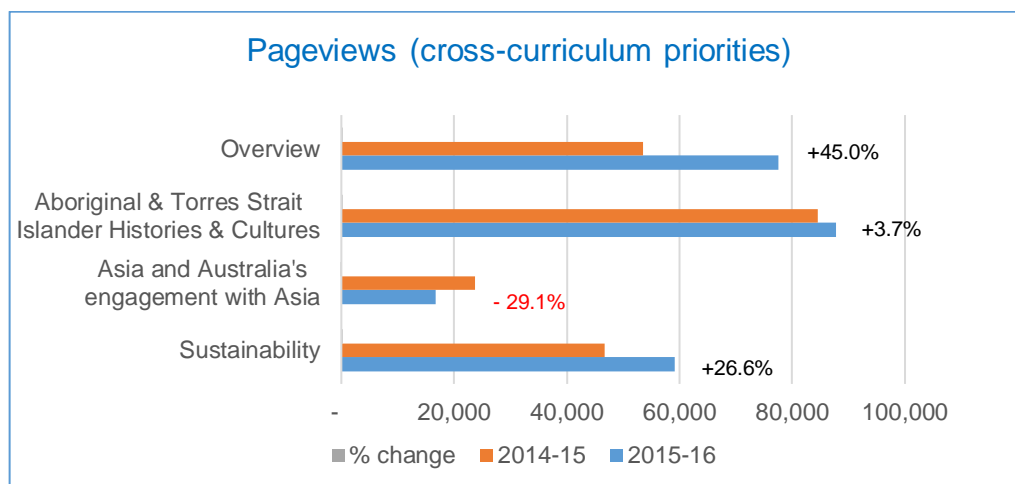
Graph 7 – Pageviews (general capabilities)



Pageviews (cross-curriculum priorities)

The cross-curriculum priorities pages recorded a 16 per cent increase in usage, a significant change when compared with the overall decrease in visits to the Australian Curriculum website. Very strong interest was registered for the 'Overview' page and for the Sustainability priority, although these pages still attracted less interest than the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, which represented over 36 per cent of the total views of the cross-curriculum priorities.

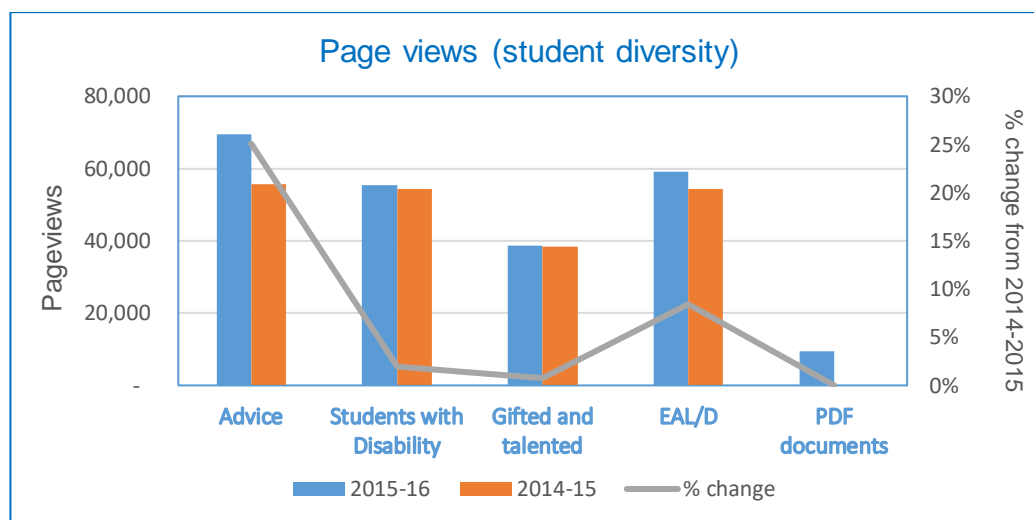
Graph 8 – Pageviews (cross-curriculum priorities)



Pageviews (student diversity)

The 'Student diversity' section attracted more pageviews than in the previous monitoring cycle, up 7.2 per cent overall, with all sections recording increased interest compared to 2014–15. The 'Advice' page, in particular, proved to be more popular, showing an increase of over 25 per cent.

Graph 9 – Pageviews (student diversity)



e. User surveys and interviews

In October 2016 a survey was made available on the Australian Curriculum website to elicit specific feedback on the usability and functionality of the website. The data will also be used to inform the redevelopment of the Australian Curriculum website. One of the major advantages of this survey is that it captures demographic information that cannot be obtained from Google Analytics.

f. Methodology

The survey was distributed via Survey Monkey® and questions were streamed according to the respondent's choice of pathway (for example, teacher, parent, student).

The survey contained a mix of open and closed questions, seeking both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative results have been included in the following analysis; the most of the qualitative results have being used for the Australian Curriculum website redevelopment project (see section 6).

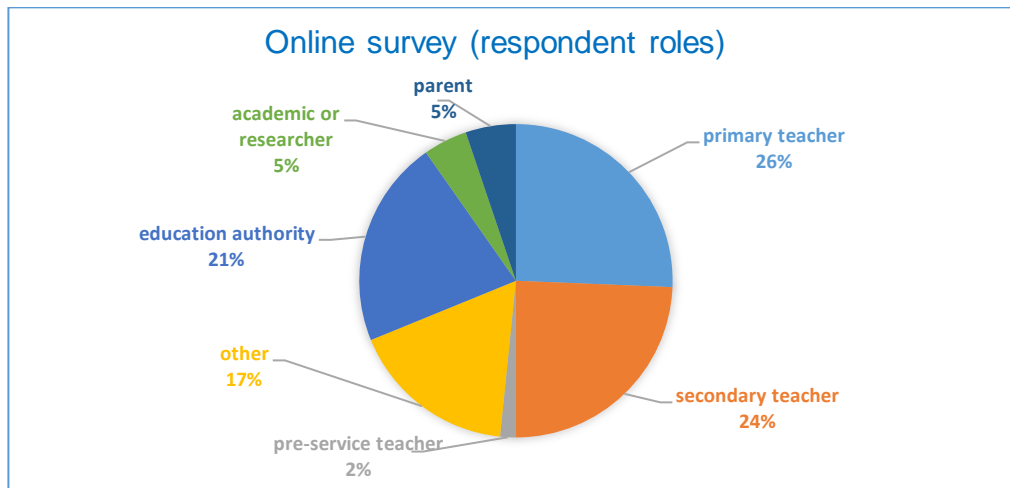
A total of 308 respondents had completed the survey by 4 November 2016. The survey remains open, allowing ongoing monitoring of stakeholder feedback, particularly as work progresses to redevelop the Australian Curriculum website.

The online survey invited respondents to indicate their willingness to participate in a telephone or face-to-face interview and/or to be part of user testing of the redeveloped website at a later date. Of the 308 respondents to the online survey, 48 offered to contribute further, and 17 interviews were subsequently conducted.

g. Demographics of survey respondents

The majority of respondents were teachers or individuals employed by an educational authority.

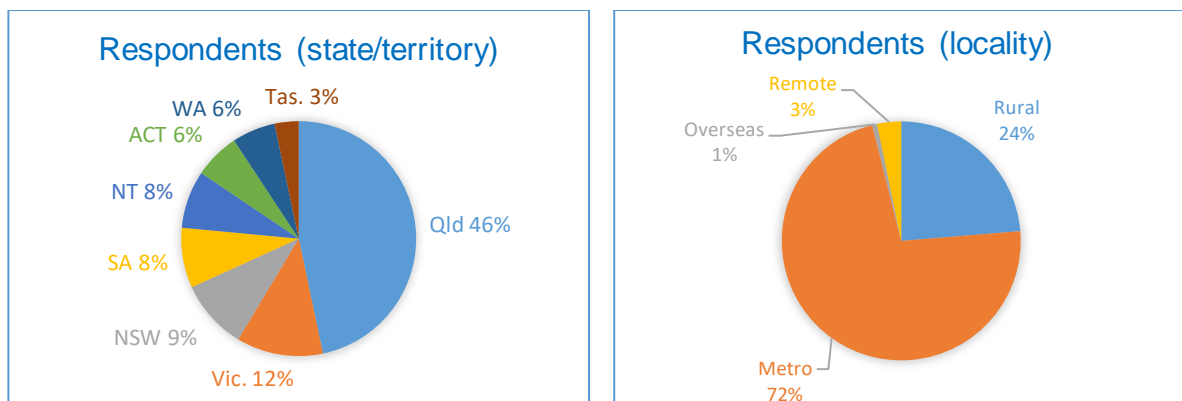
Graph 10 – Online survey (respondent roles)



As Queensland was the state that accessed the Australian Curriculum website most frequently during this latest monitoring cycle, it is not surprising that most respondents were also from Queensland. Survey respondents from the Northern Territory and the ACT were over-represented compared to their populations and actual website usage.

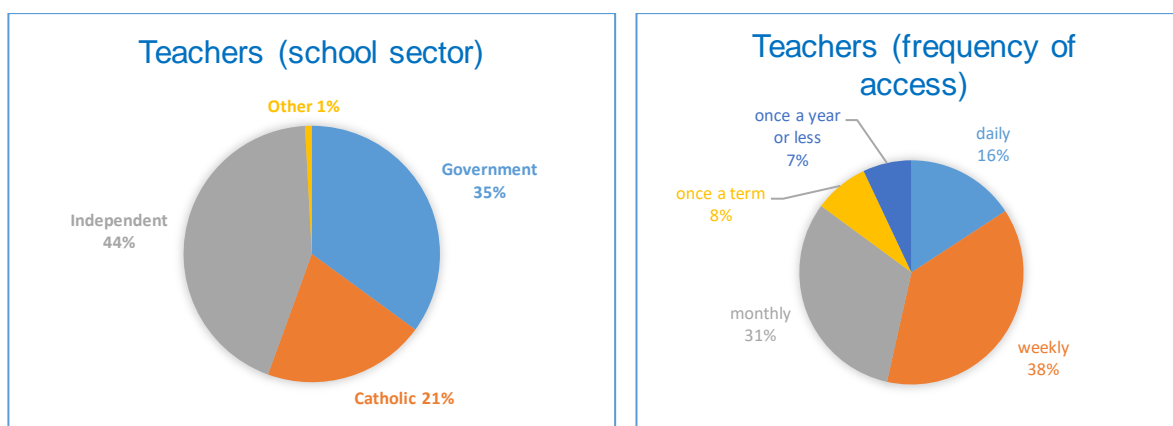
Respondents were also more likely to be from metropolitan areas, although 27 per cent were from rural and remote areas.

Graphs 10.1 and 10.2 – Respondents (state/territory and locality)



Within the teacher-specific population ($n = 117$) of respondents, the majority were from independent schools.

Graphs 11.1 and 11.2 – Teacher respondents



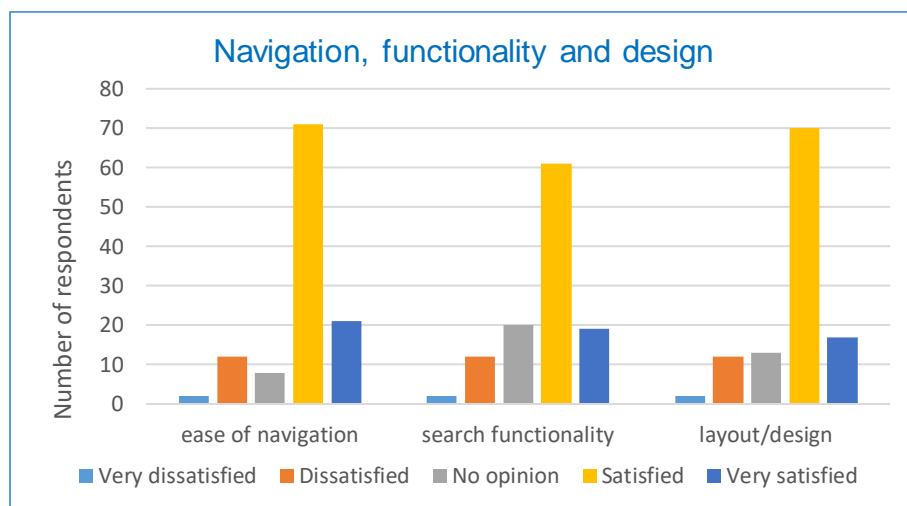
Teacher respondents also indicated a preference for laptops and desktops to access the website. The majority of teacher respondents also reported using Chrome as a browser.

h. Feedback from survey respondents

Reports from previous monitoring cycles revealed some concerns around ease of navigation, search functionality and layout/design.

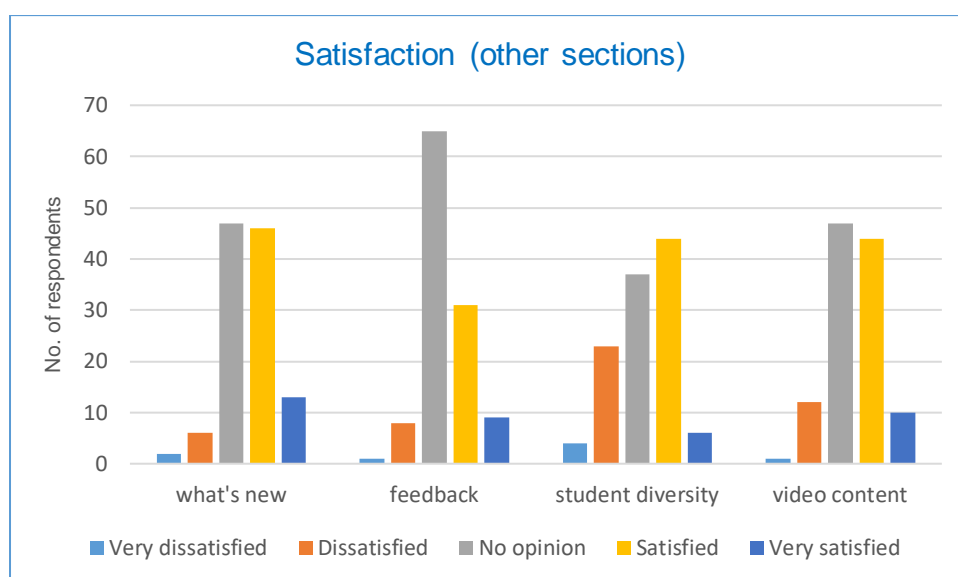
The 2015–16 monitoring cycle has provided evidence that users are reasonably satisfied with these aspects of the Australian Curriculum website. This could be explained by the fact that most respondents identified as frequent users of the website and that they would inevitably be more familiar with its features.

Graph 12 – Satisfaction with key features



Building on comments from previous monitoring cycles, stakeholders were asked about their use of other sections of the Australian Curriculum website.

Graph 13 – Satisfaction (other sections)



Users of the 'Student diversity' section of the website report a noticeably higher level of dissatisfaction. This feedback is contributing to the redevelopment of the Australian Curriculum website, specifically in relation to revising the flowchart and adding resources for teachers.

Respondents were asked to nominate the features of the website that they liked most and those they liked least. The features that drew the most positive comments were:

- filtering
- navigation, especially of content descriptions and content elaborations
- scope and sequence documents
- printing functionality
- examples of student work
- quick links
- downloading PDFs.

Some of the features of the website that respondents liked **least** were found by other respondents to be the website's **best** features, including:

- ease of navigation
- search functionality
- level of textual detail
- number of links
- tabs in 'Student diversity'
- visibility of general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities
- location of PDF documents.

With reference to the overall size of the Australian Curriculum itself, there was considerable criticism of the need to scroll through lengthy sections of text. As is the case with all data collected from the online survey, this feedback is contributing to the redevelopment of the Australian Curriculum website.

i. Findings – Interviews

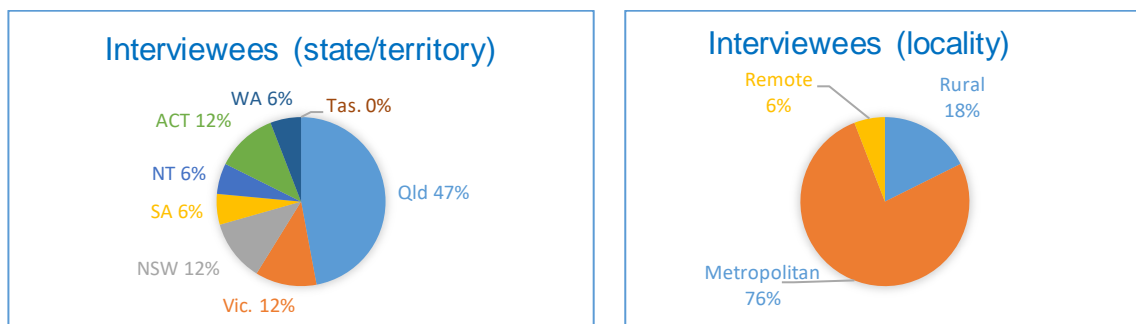
Seventeen post-survey interviews were conducted in October 2016. These interviews focused specifically on:

- specific pathways that users take in accessing information on the website
- functionality considered to be essential
- preferred display options for content
- adjustments to pages to allow better printing
- general suggestions for improvement.

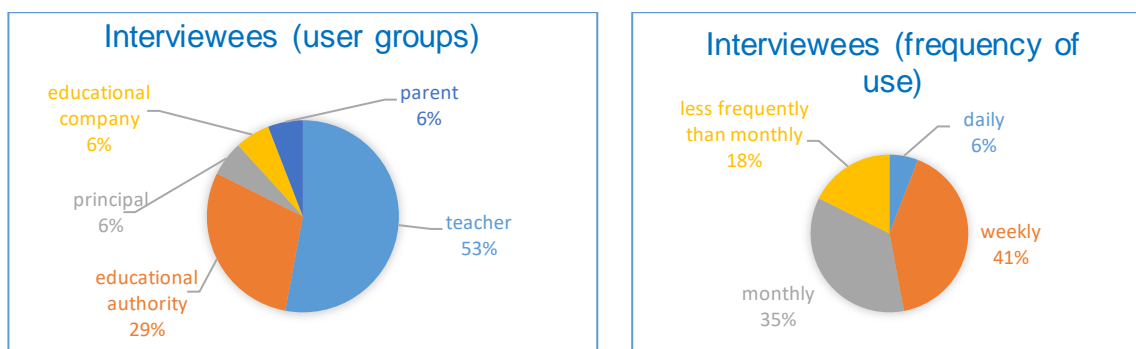
j. Demographics of interviewees

Every attempt was made to achieve as representative a sample of interviewees as possible, and ACARA’s Curriculum unit sent invitations to stakeholder groups and other networks. However, participation was entirely dependent upon availability. A large number of interviewees came from Queensland, reflecting that jurisdiction’s longstanding involvement with the Australian Curriculum and concomitant use of the website. The majority of interviewees were located in metropolitan areas, and they identified themselves as teachers or employees of education authorities.

Graphs 14 – Interviewees (location)



Graphs 15 – Interviewees (user group and frequency of use)



k. Feedback from interviewees

The detailed feedback provided by interviewees has provided useful information for the redevelopment of the Australian Curriculum website. There was broad consensus on the value of features such as:

- the Australian Curriculum: Resources, a new portal that houses a range of video and print resources that support teaching and learning
- filter options
- the student diversity section
- printing and downloading functionality
- scope and sequence documents.

The potential for improvements for the website was also recognised, including the following:

- enhancing the home page display, especially for first-time users
- improving display options
- reducing the amount of content on any one page, especially to minimise scrolling
- providing better search functionality (fewer clicks)
- providing Word and/or Excel versions of existing materials
- renaming and reallocating the PDF sections
- providing better access to scope and sequence documents
- improving menu presentation for tablets / smaller screens
- enabling concurrent visibility of content descriptions and achievement standards
- segregating parent information
- improving presentation for primary teachers
- emphasising general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities
- listing all content elaborations for a content description at one time
- removing the title page from print/download functionality

All suggestions are being evaluated as part of the redevelopment of the Australian Curriculum website.

7. Stakeholder feedback

a. Submissions

Fourteen submissions were received from state and territory education authorities. Three submissions were provided by professional bodies (see appendices A and B).

Stakeholders were invited to comment on their experience of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum during the 2015–16 monitoring cycle. Additionally, they were asked to consider the pitch, structure and validity of the achievement standards and the quality and validity of the general capabilities.

b. Key issues

General commentary on the Australian Curriculum was very positive, as were the responses relating specifically to the achievement standards and general capabilities.

A summary of the issues raised by stakeholders is provided in the table below. More detailed discussion of jurisdictional feedback is offered in section 7.

Issue/request	Response
<p>Achievement standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistency and clarity within and between learning areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ support for implementation ○ illustrations of practice • work samples • meeting the needs of diverse learners • measuring achievement 	<p>During this period of curriculum stability, a key focus of ACARA’s work, as described in the work plan, is to provide expertise and advice to stakeholders, on request, to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Specific support in relation to achievement standards will be provided throughout 2017. ACARA will continue to publish illustrations of practice and work samples across learning areas to enhance access for a range of learners and to illustrate a variety of assessment strategies and standards of student work.</p> <p>In 2017, specific examples include the development of illustrations of practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; further exemplars in relation to mathematics proficiencies; work samples in additional subjects within the HASS learning area, and in five languages.</p>
<p>General capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotion of this dimension to stakeholders • prominence on website and ability to filter • support for embedding in learning areas • provision of developmental sequence 	<p>The general capabilities that form part of the three-dimensional Australian Curriculum reflect international research on the ways these types of skills extend academic learning and prepare students for life and work in the 21st century. ACARA’s Curriculum unit is providing support for jurisdictional implementation of the general capabilities, on request. The appointment of a curriculum specialist, general capabilities,</p>

Issue/request	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meeting the needs of diverse learners 21st century skills 	<p>enables jurisdictional support for professional learning in this area, with a clear focus on catering for the full range of learners.</p> <p>A new project to redevelop the Australian Curriculum website offers the facility to give greater attention to the three-dimensional aspect of the Australian Curriculum, including the general capabilities.</p>
<p>Period of curriculum stability</p> <p>Time for jurisdictions to implement effectively</p> <p>Development of additional resources that exemplify the achievement standards</p>	<p>Under the 2016–2020 work plan, ACARA's Curriculum unit is committed to providing support for jurisdictional implementation of the Australian Curriculum. This support includes collaboration with stakeholders to develop resources and provision of advice to schools and teachers through jurisdictional authorities.</p>
<p>Australian Senior Secondary Curriculum</p> <p>Further development of courses</p> <p>Provision of work samples to exemplify the achievement standards</p>	<p>State and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities are responsible for determining how the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards are to be integrated into their courses. Some states and territories commenced implementation of integrated courses in 2014, while others are still determining integration timelines.</p> <p>ACARA's Curriculum unit continues to work with states and territories to consider options for the senior secondary Australian Curriculum subjects.</p> <p>Some stakeholders have expressed interest in developing work samples to exemplify the Australian Curriculum: Senior Secondary Curriculum. At present, ACARA's Curriculum unit has no capacity to undertake this work.</p> <p>The Curriculum unit's four-year program of research to inform future iterations of the Australian Curriculum will include consideration of national and international trends and imperatives in curriculum development for senior secondary students.</p>

c. Learning areas

English

The Australian Curriculum: English was endorsed by federal, state and territory education ministers in December 2010. By 2015, all states and territories had implemented the Australian Curriculum: English for Foundation – Year 10.

During the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, the Australian Curriculum: English pages of the Australian Curriculum website have been accessed more than 1,000,000 times by users from every state and territory. The majority of views for both versions 7.5 and 8.2 have been of the landing page and the rationale. More than 11,000 users have visited the ‘Key ideas’ page in version 8.2.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

The New South Wales Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (NSW BOSTES) noted that the changes to the Australian Curriculum: English resulting from the 2014 Review of the Australian Curriculum had been helpful in clarifying aspects such as the emphasis to be placed on a phonics-based approach to teaching. The BOSTES submission also confirmed that the NSW English syllabus, incorporating the Australian Curriculum, would be fully implemented by the end of 2016 and that monitoring of the content and the implementation of this syllabus would be ongoing.

The Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority (QCAA) described the processes adopted by Queensland schools to incorporate the general capabilities (GCs) and cross-curriculum priorities (CCPs) in their programs, using the tagging in the Australian curriculum to guide decisions. The authority reported that schools have either embedded the GCs and CCPs where there was a ‘natural fit’ within a learning area, or they have selected a particular GC as an area of focus, such as literacy in the early years of schooling. In other examples, they have aligned the capabilities with programs or initiatives that support the school’s core curriculum, such as cultural or pastoral care programs.

Information collected through this process indicated some concerns with the Literacy GC, including a lack of alignment between the Literacy GC and the English curriculum in relation to terminology and level of complexity. Teachers reported confusion about the relationships between the English curriculum literacy strand and the Literacy general capability. There is evidence that the additional levels of the Literacy general capability continuum are often viewed as an alternative to the English learning area content curriculum, particularly for students with intellectual disabilities or multiple impairments, rather than being used to support students to access and progress through all of the learning areas. This is likely to be because the English and Mathematics curricula do not contain pre-Foundation levels.

Queensland teachers also reported inconsistencies in the rate of development between levels on the continuum, particularly in the additional levels that, although intended to support students with disabilities, still present unreasonable expectations. An example provided in the submission related to the requirement that Level 1e students ‘plan and deliver short presentations related to learning area topics’.

The QCAA submission also offered comments on some issues with the achievement standards for English. The achievement standards are organised into receptive and productive modes that do not reflect the organisational structure of the curriculum, making it difficult to understand which parts of the achievement standards relate to these different communication modes. A consequence of this is that teachers find it difficult to assess progression and growth across year levels.

The issues raised in this submission mirrored other incidental feedback received from teachers and schools during the 2015–16 monitoring cycle. General comment has been that

the English achievement standards describe appropriate expectations for what students should know and be able to do at each year level. However, the degree of specificity used to describe understandings and skills expected at different year levels varies significantly. For example, the achievement standards for Years 3 and 5 explicitly refer to students using phonics and word knowledge to read more complex and unfamiliar words, whereas there is no such detail for Year 4. Tracking student progress in particular aspects or skills or understanding expected levels of attainment in the Australian Curriculum: English is made more challenging by inconsistencies in the achievement standards.

The Queensland Department of Education (DET) suggested that the literacy continuum include more detailed examples drawn from learning areas other than English and that the aspects of the continuum relating to the early years be written more clearly. The DET also identified a problem with the variable literacy demands of the achievement standards across the learning areas. One example cited was one of the Year 3 Science achievement standards, which describes 'a range of text types'. This is inconsistent with Year 3 achievement standards in other learning areas. With specific reference to the Australian Curriculum: English, the DET commented that there was a misalignment between the content descriptions and the achievement standards in relation to the literature strand.

The South Australian Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) provided detailed feedback gathered from teachers, school leaders and a small number of parents. Parents reported that the Literacy GC was particularly important; a significant number would like to see student progress in the GCs included in student reports. Across SA, teachers' use and valuing of the GCs have been variable, although approximately half of all primary and secondary teachers reported that they regularly used the Literacy GC continuum to inform planning and programming.

The Tasmanian Department of Education noted that teachers often find it difficult to differentiate the demands of the English curriculum from the literacy continuum and welcomed the work being done by the NSW DET and ACARA to develop literacy progressions. Tasmania offered general support for the achievement standards in their current form and noted that teacher moderation and judgements about student progress were well-supported by the achievement standards.

With specific reference to the Australian Curriculum: English, Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) felt that there were too few opportunities for higher-order thinking other than *evaluate* and *analyse*, with students generally asked only to *identify*, *recall*, *use* and *create*. The submission pointed to the notion that the general capabilities are taught through, or embedded in, the learning areas is questionable, and suggested that if there are gaps in the embedding process, students will not develop critical 21st century skills. The lack of explicit reference to the capabilities within the learning areas can mean that teachers see them as an afterthought.

Steiner Education Australia contributed extensive feedback on the Australian Curriculum, giving detailed information about the differing approach to curriculum adopted in Steiner schools. With regard to the English curriculum, Steiner Education suggested that the combination of the content, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities coupled with the pressure around basic skills testing (NAPLAN) could result in an 'overcrowded experience for teachers and children'. The submission claimed that 'this has detrimental effects on learning engagement, teacher success and retention and more importantly on long term outcomes for students'. As an alternative, Steiner Education proposed a more experience-based approach to curriculum, where students' sensory development was a key driver of curriculum design. ACARA notes that the Steiner Education comments do not

acknowledge the three-dimensional nature of the Australian Curriculum, which integrates the general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities within the learning areas as appropriate.

Responses to enquiries

All enquiries relating to the Australian Curriculum: English were requests for advice and support around the content of the curriculum and practical implementation strategies.

Mathematics

The Australian Curriculum: Mathematics was endorsed by federal, state and territory education ministers in December 2010. By 2015, all states and territories had implemented the F–10 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics.

The mathematics curriculum is organised around the interaction of three content strands and four proficiencies. The content strands are Number and Algebra, Measurement and Geometry, and Statistics and Probability. They describe what is to be taught and learnt. The proficiencies are understanding, fluency, problem-solving and reasoning. They describe how content is explored or developed; that is, they emphasise the thinking and doing actions necessary in mathematics.

Analysis of website visits indicate that users across all stages of schooling F–10 and across all states and territories are regular visitors to the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics material. There were almost one million pageviews of the mathematics curriculum, the third highest number of pageviews of all learning areas. This number is a reduction of around 16 per cent from the previous monitoring cycle, consistent with the overall reduction in pageviews for the more established learning areas.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

Feedback from states and territories identified some issues associated with the Mathematics F–10 achievement standards. The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) expressed concern that ‘in mathematics the proficiency skills are not clearly identified’ and ‘without the proficiencies there is inadequate guidance to determine depth of knowledge or sophistication of skills’. The QCAA also pointed to a misalignment of the verbs used to describe the proficiencies at each year level, the content descriptions contained in that year level and the achievement standards for the same year level.

The Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) recommended that the achievement standards have a consistent structure across the learning areas, claiming that they are too fine-grained and are difficult to use when designing assessment tasks.

Specific references to the achievement standards in the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics reflected the Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) view that these simply restate the content, do not necessarily align with the content and should not be used as the basis for reporting. ISQ provided the example of the Year 3 achievement standard, which is 15 sentences in length and contains two sentences that refer to just one content description (ACMNA059). It is inherently problematic that some content descriptions are part of the standard while many others do not enjoy the same status.

Feedback from the Tasmanian Department of Education (DET) indicated that teachers are using the achievement standards consistently across the state. According to the DET submission, 'Tasmanian government school teachers are familiar with the use of the achievement standards for assessment purposes and incorporate them into their reporting processes and to support future student learning. Teachers' understanding of the standards as a sequence of learning within a subject area supports this.'

The absence of achievement standards for Mathematics 10A was raised in the ACT cross-sectoral submission as problematic for some schools, together with requests for ACARA to work towards 'developing achievement standards for the 10A Mathematics Curriculum... allowing teachers to report to differentiated achievement standards.'

It should be noted that the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics does not include achievement standards for 10A as not all students are expected to reach this level of achievement. The expected level of achievement for Year 10 is the Year 10 achievement standard. The content contained in 10A is intended for more advanced learners for whom material is needed as a means of preparing for the more rigorous senior secondary courses.

Mathematics Proficiencies

Feedback from the previous monitoring cycle and the 2014 Australian Curriculum Review indicated that teachers were not using the proficiencies in the way they were intended. There was a view that the proficiencies were not sufficiently evident in the content descriptions and in the achievement standards. Desktop reviews and feedback from the Mathematics by Inquiry round table conducted by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training (held in May 2015) highlighted the need for annotated work samples that focus on the reasoning and problem-solving proficiencies.

As a result, the Australian Government Department of Education commissioned ACARA to look at improving teacher engagement with the proficiencies in the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics for Foundation – Year 10. This work began in July 2015.

The objectives of the project were to:

1. clarify the purpose of the mathematics proficiencies
2. provide teachers with strategies for using the proficiencies by collecting and publishing illustrations of good practice
3. provide examples of student work that illustrate the proficiencies.

The project is now complete. It consists of five illustrations of practice for teachers to view, resources for developing rich assessment tasks, annotated work samples and links to relevant research, all of which are published on the Australian Curriculum website.

Responses to enquiries

As the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics has been in use for some years, teachers appear to be familiar with its use and applications. The requests for information are minimal and are mostly based on clarification of particular content descriptions and requests for suggestions as to how the proficiencies can be accessed through the teaching of the mathematical content.

Science

The Australian Curriculum: Science was endorsed by federal, state and territory education ministers in December 2010. By 2015, all states and territories had implemented the content of the Australian Curriculum: Science for Foundation – Year 10. This learning area's organisation in the form of three interrelated strands (science understanding, science as a human endeavour and science inquiry skills) has been adopted by most jurisdictions. In NSW, science is taught to primary students in an integrated way, together with the learning area of technology.

During the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, close to 640,000 users viewed pages relating to the Australian Curriculum: Science. This is a small reduction from the previous monitoring cycle, perhaps reflecting greater familiarity with this well-established learning area. The most commonly viewed pages were the landing page and the rationale.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

States and territories provided very little feedback on the Australian Curriculum: Science. The submission from the NSW BOSTES suggested that the scope of change to the Science elements of the Technologies curriculum may be challenging for teachers in primary schools.

The 'overcrowding' of the curriculum was a major focus of the previous monitoring cycle. ACARA's efforts to reduce the content have generally met with approval.

The QCAA response was supportive of the scope and pitch of the achievement standard and noted the 'choice of focus of aspects of Science as Human Endeavour in the achievement standards is appropriate and supports the choice of authentic teaching contexts that align to the discipline-specific content taught at the relevant year level'.

Media

Public interest in science education has mainly focused on the declining interest of Australian students in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and the coincidental trend of Australian students' decreasing performance in international comparative assessment programs such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study). The potential negative impact of this trend on the future success of Australia's economy as well as the importance of STEM education for the development of essential twenty-first century skills for young Australians are issues that have been widely acknowledged (Chang, 2015; Connery, 2015; Sturmer, 2016) and prompted the release of the National Innovation and Science Agenda by the Prime Minister's Office in December 2015.

Responses to enquiries

During the monitoring cycle, only a few enquiries were made by email or phone call. This may be attributed to the fact that in most jurisdictions the Australian Curriculum: Science has been in effect for some years and most teachers are comfortable with its use and application. Requests for information were mainly concerned with locating specific information on the website, the interpretation of achievement standards, some clarification of specific content descriptors and the differences between versions 7.5 and 8.2.

Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)

Note to readers:

History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business are 'subjects' in 7–10 and 'sub-strands' in F–6/7 HASS, hence their careful use in this section. The subjects are capitalised and the sub-strands are not. It must be noted that HASS is an 'umbrella' learning area and also a stand-alone subject for students in Foundation – Years 6/7. When referring to primary education, the prefix F–6/7 is used throughout. This new subject is the source of most jurisdictional responses and analysis of website usage.

Endorsement of the curricula for the final three Humanities and Social Science (HASS) subjects occurred in September 2015. These were the redesigned F–6/7 HASS curriculum, and the revised 7–10 Civics and Citizenship, and 7–10 Economics and Business curricula.

The significant aspects of the F–6/7 HASS curriculum redesign included a combined subject achievement standard (replacing the previous subject achievement standard) and a combined skills and inquiry strand (replacing four sets of subject-specific skills). The updated Australian Curriculum website included a new section for the addition of the F–6/7 HASS subject.

The first year of implementation of the revised HASS curriculum received support from academics, teacher educators, professional associations, jurisdictional education officers and teachers.

Throughout the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, pages associated with version 8.2 of the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences were accessed more than 1.27 million times, compared with 1.13 million times during the 2014–15 cycle. It is difficult to make segmented comparisons between the 2014–15 and 2015–16 monitoring cycles due to the redesign of the HASS curriculum into primary and secondary subjects. A more useful segmentation is an analysis of the use of the updated website for HASS.

As with previous versions, the curriculum on the version 8.2 website could be viewed in row view, column view or elaborations view. The introduction of four sub-strands in the F–6/7 HASS subject complicated the default view (the row view) because the sub-strands of Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business were not visible and the navigation icons were not overt. This configuration attracted considerable public inquiry and feedback.

During the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, visitor numbers included users from every state and territory across Australia. The greatest number of HASS website users were from Queensland (nearly 25 per cent); South Australia (20 per cent); and Victoria (nearly 19 per cent). In proportion to state and territory population, the site was most frequently accessed by Tasmania and ACT users. As was true for other learning areas, the number of Western Australian visitors decreased significantly.

The curriculum pages of the HASS subjects were most popular, with the row view comprising nearly 100 per cent of views. In the new F–6/7 HASS curriculum, there were nearly 270,000 views, the majority of which were views by row.

The Australian Curriculum's 7–10 History (compulsory to Year 10) received over 280,000 views and 7–10 Geography, over 230,000. As in the previous monitoring cycle, the least viewed HASS subjects remain 7–10 Civics and Citizenship (69,000 pageviews) and 7–10 Economics and Business (50,000 pageviews), indicating a slower take-up of these subjects.

The web pages for the new F–6/7 HASS subject provide a detailed ‘Structure’ page (6,256 pageviews) and host a range of PDF support materials (5,526 pageviews) and an extensive new glossary (626 pageviews). Compared to the overall HASS curriculum page visits, this access seems very low in view of stakeholder requests for more curriculum interpretation support, and when compared to the anecdotal feedback on the value of the PDF resources for this subject.

By way of comparison, the senior secondary Modern History and senior secondary Geography pages each received approximately 4,000 views.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

Sector feedback in relation to HASS is mostly affirming. Some common concerns continue in relation to issues that prevailed before the 2014 Review of the Australian Curriculum. Issues raised in relation to the revised HASS subjects, predicted by jurisdictions in the 2014–15 monitoring cycle, were not mentioned in submissions for this third monitoring cycle. Significantly, jurisdictions reported positively on the design of the achievement standards in the HASS learning area and the capacity for HASS to host the general capabilities that have typically received little attention during the early implementation period – Intercultural Understanding and Ethical Understanding. Most significant negative feedback concerns the volume of content across the learning area.

The submissions from several jurisdictions were critical of the differing achievement standard constructs (content versus conceptual) across the Australian Curriculum’s learning areas. A number of stakeholders emphasised that this creates inevitable planning issues for primary teachers and compounds the challenges for teachers of multi-age classes. In relation to HASS achievement standards, consistent comments involved the strength of the rationale for the design of the achievement standard, including the selection of verbs and the coarse-grained design-making interpretation by teachers easier for the development of marking guides and rubrics. The conceptual construct of HASS was praised for allowing flexibility to meet local needs. Some criticism of the F–6/7 achievement standards was due to the lack of emphasis on ‘analyse’ and ‘evaluate’, despite the strong presence of these skills in the content.

The Australian Curriculum: HASS F–6/7 curriculum offers two versions of the achievement standard: subject (‘combined’) or sub-strand-specific. Queensland reported on primary teachers’ views, concluding that there remains a strong preference for subject-oriented achievement standards as these ‘provide a holistic statement of expected learning across the sub-strands’ and ‘allow more opportunities to blend learning and assess skills and inquiry using a single context.’

Although the F–6/7 curriculum version of the Year 7 achievement standard was considered in responses to the AIS South Australia as ‘unwieldy and verbose’, other jurisdictional submissions supported the combined structure as a model for early secondary school years where subjects such as Economics and Business might be integrated into other courses.

Alignment within and across HASS achievement standards received favourable comment across sectors. The HASS achievement standards were widely regarded as age- and year-level appropriate and were considered to have appropriate expectations in relation to increasing complexity in students’ work. Some submissions commented on the lower

cognitive demand in the statements for younger learners. The language of the F–6/7 HASS achievement standards was commended by a number of respondents. According to QCAA,

In Foundation to Year 6, there is very clear alignment between the language used in the achievement standard and content descriptions, making it easy for teachers to see the links between the sub-strands (e.g. History, Geography, Economics and Business, and Civics and Citizenship).

The NSW BOSTES submission cites its ‘considerable investment in curriculum and support material development...and professional development’ in choosing to maintain discrete K–10 syllabuses for History and Geography.

Jurisdictions and professional associations continue to report concerns about the ‘amount of content’ (South Australia) and ‘overcrowded curriculum’ (Steiner Education Australia) in the Australian Curriculum. The South Australian submission stated that the ‘standards are long (particularly English and HASS)’ and that the addition of Economics and Business, and Civics and Citizenship curricula in secondary schools ‘added a large workload to subjects already pressed for time’, minimising ‘deep rich learning’ to cover content.

There is little evidence of wide implementation of the 7–10 Civics and Citizenship curriculum and the 7–10 Economics and Business curriculum. New South Wales has developed civics and citizenship as a type of capability embedded across the curriculum, reducing subject load. Queensland has streamlined the curriculum, creating advice on a core curriculum. Concern has been expressed that some strategies risk superficial coverage of content in the Australian Curriculum’s Civics and Citizenship curriculum, as could be the case for Economics and Business in light of emerging professional dialogue and research about enterprise in education.

The value of inquiry learning was asserted in a number of reports. Concerns expressed during the previous monitoring cycle regarding the loss of disciplinary inquiry in the F–6/7 HASS curriculum was not evident in recent reports.

Previous critique of the content arrangement in the 7–10 History curriculum persists. Specifically, numerous submissions pointed to inconsistent cognitive progression and alignment of content with achievement standards. There was recurring comment regarding the inconsistent conceptual design across the subjects/sub-strands within the HASS learning area, with specific mention of the conceptual organisers used in History and Geography and the organising ideas used in Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business.

Most organisations commented on the level of representation of the general capabilities in teaching and learning programs, with a common sentiment that they ‘take a back seat’. It was consistently reported that Personal and Social Capability (PSC), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Ethical Understanding (EU), and Intercultural Understanding (IU) could be better supported, and that EU and IU were the least addressed in practice. HASS was identified as having the most potential for particular capabilities, in particular EU and IU.

Of interest was a call for the inclusion of skills, behaviours and dispositions of ‘entrepreneurship’ (AIS South Australia) and ‘entrepreneurism’ (Queensland). This reflects media and recent national and international policy discourse. The concepts, skills and dispositions of enterprise education strongly resonate with aspects of the HASS Economics and Business curriculum and ACARA’s current curriculum collaboration with the ATO and ASIC on the 2014 National Consumer and Financial Literacy Strategy.

Work samples were seen as a highly valued resource in explaining achievement standards for assessment. The call for a transdisciplinary approach through general capabilities included references to HASS as a significant host learning area. The use of work samples that integrate general capabilities could offer 'depth, breadth and scope', and more samples were proposed. This is timely information for the HASS work samples project, which is a focus for the year ahead.

In relation to all of the learning areas of the Australian Curriculum, primary teachers found the inconsistent access to achievement standards in the website very challenging. However, printable PDF resources received positive reviews. Some jurisdictions requested more materials that support understanding of concepts, something which the F–6/7 HASS online PDFs have provided since early 2016. HASS curriculum-on-a-page PDFs for Years F–6/7 were the most requested resource by jurisdictions following ACARA presentations.

The new website area of the F–6/7 HASS subject provides a detailed 'Structure' page and hosts a range of PDF support materials and an extensive new glossary. These website pages were visited in very low numbers. Compared to the nearly 270,000 pageviews for the F–6/7 HASS curriculum, this access seems very low in view of stakeholder call for more curriculum interpretation support and a more user-friendly website, especially when compared to the broad anecdotal feedback on the value of the PDF resources for this subject. Fewer than 3 per cent of website visits accessed the redesigned F–6/7 elaborations for the skills and inquiry strand.

Media

During the 2015–16 period following the launch of the revised HASS curriculum, initial media attention lessened in relation to the previous year. Queensland's *The Courier Mail* pursued the topic of overcrowding in the primary curriculum, in 'Curriculum's epic fail' (Martyn–Jones 26 July 2016). The continued discourse on the nature of religion, citizenship, racism and civic cohesion in the curriculum exposed diverse points of view, for example, 'How ideology took over schools' (Donnelly K, *Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 2016); 'Time for schools to stop the spread of extremism' (Donnelly K, *Daily Telegraph*, 23 October 2015); 'State schools play an important role by promoting inclusiveness and fair-minded values' (Nairn for the Australian Principals' Federation, 12 June 2016) and 'We can overcome tension between Islam and Christianity by looking to their shared teaching' (Davey, *The Mercury (Hobart)*, 27 September 2015).

Two topics emerged in media discussion with implications for the Economics and Business curriculum for Years 5–10. First, articles on enterprise and financial literacy – 'Is the education system of today failing to foster entrepreneurs?' (*Startup Daily*, 21 October 2015), 'Money-savvy children want financial literacy lessons in school' (Stock, *EssentialKids*, 4 September 2015); and 'Enterprise education needed for Australian kids' (*Skynews*, 25 September 2015) – exemplify a call for enterprise education and align with government innovation policy.

Second, the Australian National Financial Literacy Strategy (2014) has attracted media attention, including Sawatzki's discussion on shifting the emphasis from 'responsibility' to 'capability' (*The Conversation*, 17 May 2016).

Responses to enquiries

Responses were provided to a range of individuals, organisations and parliamentary members from all states and territories.

Inquiries from organisations and individuals focused on whether the HASS curriculum continues to support certain content. In particular, there were queries regarding History and Geography in F–6/7 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and identities. Many inquiries required an explanation of the redesigned HASS curriculum, particularly in relation to aspects of the F–6/7 HASS subject and time allocations for the secondary HASS subjects.

Individual inquiries, predominantly from educators, mainly involved website navigation. These included the position of Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business in the F–6/7 HASS curriculum, clarification of work samples, advice on printing the curriculum and the location of PDFs.

Advice was sought in relation to assessment, interpretation of the achievement standards and their use with students from diverse backgrounds, and school-based implementation of the 7–10 Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business curricula.

Throughout the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, there were requests to explain how the HASS curriculum supports topics relating to three broad recurring themes. The most common requests involved education in democracy, such as the values and processes of democracy, civic knowledge, government, electoral education and recognition of civic contribution. Other common queries related to citizenship, religious and social cohesion themes, including the place of British traditions, Australia’s Christian heritage, beliefs and values around religions and world views, Harmony Day, Reconciliation Australia, intercultural understanding and global citizenship. The third and smaller area of inquiry involved philanthropy, social enterprise, enterprise skills, and financial literacy.

ACARA curriculum staff contributed to a number of government and organisational submissions. Examples include federal parliamentary inquiries into electoral education, youth at risk of radicalisation, Forced Marriage and Choices Pilot Project for DET and social enterprise for the Prime Minister’s Committee.

The Arts

The Australian Curriculum: The Arts was endorsed by education ministers in September 2015.

Throughout the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, curriculum pages associated with the Australian Curriculum: The Arts have been accessed just under 600,000 times. Most searches invested just over five minutes, with visitors usually landing on the ‘Introduction’ and ‘Visual Arts’ pages in versions 7.5 and 8.2. Version 7.5 had just under 100,000 hits as most users of the website were accessing materials after the curriculum’s endorsement.

The highest number of visitors to the Australian Curriculum: The Arts materials found their way to the Visual Arts site, with over 127,000 hits recorded during the monitoring cycle. This was probably a consequence of the release of the Visual Arts F–6 work samples on the Australian Curriculum: Resources portal in December 2015. In order of the number of visits, users then went to ‘Music’, ‘Drama’, ‘Dance’ and ‘Media Arts’ pages.

To assist stakeholders with curriculum implementation, the sequence of content in the PDF document in version 8.1 was reviewed to improve its clarity. The updated document explained the difference between ‘sub-strands’ and ‘subjects’ and was published on the website in version 8.2.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

The latest monitoring cycle has resulted in very few jurisdictional submissions containing references to the Australian Curriculum: The Arts. In relation to the efficacy of the achievement standards in this learning area, QCAA respondents indicated that they preferred the subject-specific learning area standards to those of the learning area. Teachers reported using the subject-specific standards to assist in determining individual student progress and necessary support as well as for mapping content and achievement for assessment purposes. This submission also stated that although the achievement standards describe an appropriate increase in complexity across the bands, they have an inconsistent use of verbs and different cognitive demands across the five subjects, and that this adds to the implementation complexities of a generalist primary teacher.

In the Steiner Education Australia submission, the full integration of the arts into the methodology of all learning areas was emphasised, with the arts facilitating 'enthusiasm, engagement and joy in learning'. They assert that the arts provide a means of multimodal differentiation of the curriculum, which leads to deep learning. They quote Elliot Eisner's belief that 'the senses are direct forms of cognition and understanding' in a discussion that promotes educational reform with personalized learning, using the arts as its core.

Other feedback regarding the arts curriculum was largely as a result of the development and release of the F–6 work samples. This included state and territory educational bodies such as the Tasmanian Department of Education, which requested clarification on using the work samples to assess two year bands. The QCAA requested information regarding assessment tasks and advice in relation to work samples exemplifying student performance at, above and below the achievement standards.

Curriculum implementation has been supported by the release of work samples in Visual Arts in December 2015, followed by the development of samples in the other subjects within the Australian Curriculum: The Arts: Dance, Drama, Media Arts and Music.

Collaboration with professional associations has been a feature of the development and publication of high-quality work samples. This continued in the reporting period with the work samples in the five arts subjects to be released by the end of 2016. The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE), in particular, have discussed the value of work samples in supporting implementation and teaching practice. Visual Arts Educators of South Australia (VAESA) used the materials for training sessions at their annual conference and commented on the capacity of the samples to support teachers in developing good practice and improving student outcomes.

Media

The Australian Curriculum: The Arts was favourably referenced as an area of the curriculum that fosters innovation and creativity and promotes personal and social developmental needs in students. In *The Art of Innovation and Australia's Education Misfire*, Richard Letts argued that, 'arts graduates are as likely as graduates in engineering and computing to hold a commercial and industrial sector job in production innovation' (Letts, 2016).

Some media pieces discussed the need for the curriculum to provide a well-rounded liberal education and how the arts serve to fulfill that need. Richard Gill and Ken Robinson argued

for more ‘classroom creativity’ (*The Australian*, 14 June 2016), and Matthew Westwood argued the importance of ‘investing in arts education: the skills, mental disciplines and aesthetic judgements that produce ideas with value’ (Westwood, 2016). Robyn Gibson, in her piece titled ‘Do arts teachers have to be artists?’ (*The Conversation*, 12 September 2016), stated that a hierarchy of subjects, where the arts are not equally valued, is destructive to engagement and further learning.

Responses to enquiries

During the monitoring cycle, responses were provided to enquiries from individuals, schools and other organisations from every state and territory in Australia across a range of topics related to the Arts learning area.

Most enquiries were based on the location of information in the curriculum and advice regarding reporting against achievement standards expressed in two-year bands. One teacher was concerned that the use of the national STEM initiative would disadvantage arts education in her school context.

Health and Physical Education

Final endorsement of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (AC: HPE) took place in September 2015.

During the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, the AC: HPE curriculum pages have been accessed almost 420,000 times. This includes users from every state and territory across Australia. In descending order, the greatest number has come from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales.

Website users have accessed the AC: HPE content descriptions (from version 8.2, followed by version 7.5) approximately four times more often than any other page. This suggests that implementation of the curriculum is well underway across Australia.

The HPE curriculum has been received favorably by academics, professional associations, not-for-profit organisations, schools and teachers.

The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) – the lead professional association for HPE – continues to provide strong support for the Australian HPE curriculum, as evidenced in a March statement (Turner, 2016). The National Executive Director of ACHPER commented on curriculum similarities that now exist across states and territories and how this provides opportunities for sharing professional learning, professional practices and resources.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

Sector feedback in relation to HPE is affirming in most cases. For example, there was widespread acknowledgement that the HPE achievement standards describe appropriate expectations for what students should know at each band level. These expectations were seen as challenging but realistic and developmentally appropriate. Achievement standards were also seen to reflect the relationship within and between the strands and sub-stands.

The language of the Australian Curriculum's achievement standards was described by some respondents as confusing. Some elements were seen to be overwhelming and it was suggested that verbs used in achievement standards of the primary year levels include 'analyse' and 'evaluate'. This would require a restructure of achievement standards that are currently designed to demonstrate cognitive development across bands of learning.

Working with schools and teachers to develop work samples linked to achievement standards has provided an opportunity for ACARA to work closely with practitioners, and the process has helped to inform curriculum direction and refinement. Feedback from states and territories highlights the importance of work samples in illustrating levels of achievement. Some states suggest expanding the range and depth of work sample portfolios across all learning areas. Most sector feedback was gathered prior to, or just after, the release of the HPE work samples (F–6 released 30 June 2016, 7–10 released 30 August 2016). ACARA will continue to monitor feedback about HPE work samples.

Despite the improvements and reductions made as a result of the Review of the Australian Curriculum, some states are calling for further streamlining of achievement standards, including advice on core, extension and consolidation material within each standard, guidance for learners with exceptional needs at both ends of the learning spectrum, and a consistent approach to achievement standards across bands comprising two or more year levels, such as in HPE. Additionally, there are requests for guidance around assessment, working with composite classes and incorporating the teaching and assessment of the general capabilities within HPE.

Feedback from Steiner Education indicates that the conceptual organiser of head, heart and hands in Steiner Education's approach to the education of the whole-child aligns with the AC: HPE definition of health which encompasses physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions. Steiner Education recognises the importance of socio-emotional learning within an integrated curriculum, which has a focus on perseverance, inner discipline, play and learning by doing, all of which resonate with the HPE learning area and relate to practice such as Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility through physical activity (Hellison, 2011).

Media

During the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, public discourse included references to the ways in which the HPE curriculum addresses sexuality, domestic violence, respectful relationships, radicalisation, physical activity and academic achievement, outdoor play, sport and social/emotional learning.

The most prevalent, conflicting and strong debate across the media was in relation to the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) resources to support students and families on matters relating to sexual identity. Media articles relating to these resources accounted for more than 35 per cent of all HPE-related media alerts (*The Age*, April 2016; *News Weekly*, March 2016). The debate included the role of schools, teachers and families in teaching young people about sexuality. Similarly, there was a debate about the *Gayby Baby* film and resources for schools (*LOTL*, May 2016; *Mamma Mia*, May 2015; *Education HQ*, September 2015). There was also coverage on how sexuality education is best delivered (*West Australian*, June 2016; *Hey Sigmund*, April 2016; *The Australian*, April 2016; *ABC Radio*, April 2016; *Canberra Times*, March 2016; *Mercury*, September 2015; *Norway News*, May 2015). Although the development and use of specific programs and resources go beyond the remit of ACARA, the breadth and flexibility of the AC: HPE

supports schools to deliver age-appropriate content around human relationships and sexuality in supportive and respectful ways.

Domestic violence was seen as a significant community issue in the press (*Herald Sun*, June 2016; *Sunshine Coast Daily*, May 2016; *The Australian*, April 2016; *The Educator*, March 2016; *The Telegraph*, March 2016). The topic of respectful relationships is an explicit part of learning in HPE from Foundation to Year 10, and the role that respectful relationships education has to play in preventing gender-based violence was a dominant theme during this third monitoring cycle (*WA Today*, April 2016; *The Age*, December 2015; *ABC*, October 2015; *Brisbane Times*, September 2015; *The Australian*, September 2015; *The Educator*, September 2015).

Similarly, the role of schools in identifying and preventing radicalisation and supporting diversity and difference was commonly discussed over this reporting period (*Radio 4BC*, October 2015; *Daily Telegraph*, October 2015; *SBS*, October 2015; *The Australian*, October 2015; *Daily Telegraph*, October 2015; *Canberra Times*, October 2015; *ABC Radio*, September 2015; *The Australian*, September 2015). ACARA contributes to national discussions about countering violent extremism and has articulated where learning area and general capability content could potentially support programs for youth at risk of radicalisation.

Links between physical activity and academic achievement featured in the media during this reporting period (*Daily Telegraph*, June 2016; *Teacher Magazine ACER*, October 2015; *WA DSR*, October 2015; *ABC Brisbane*, October 2015; *The Guardian*, September 2015) as did physical activity and healthy weight (*Prevent Obesity*, April 2014; *The Age*, March 2016). The importance of play-based learning and learning in nature was also strongly reported (*The Conversation*, April 2016; *Teacher Magazine*, March 2016).

There was a call for increasing the amount of sport in schools (*Perth Now*, April 2016; *Canberra Times*, March 2016; *Weekend Australian*, November 2015; *Department Sport and Recreation*, October 2015; *SMH*, September 2015). Sport is currently a component of the HPE learning area and not an entity in itself. It is essential that the HPE curriculum make a clear distinction between *sport* as an extra-curricular activity and *sport education* as a framework for learning about sport in Health and Physical Education.

There was also discussion in the media about how well current school curriculum is equipping students for life beyond school (Geoff Masters, *ACER*, November 2015) and the need for increased focus on social and emotional skills and mental health (*Mercury*, October 2015; *ABC News*, October 2015; *SMH*, September 2015; *Teacher Magazine*, July 2015).

A range of other HPE-related issues featured in the media, including proposals to broaden understanding about food and nutrition (*The Australian*, May 2015), teach swimming (*The Educator* and *SBS*, September 2015), promote the Daniel Morcombe Curriculum (*Radio 2CC*, October 2015) and test for mental health issues in Queensland schools (*ABC News*, September 2015).

Responses to enquiries

During the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, responses were provided to enquiries from individuals, schools and other organisations from every state and territory in Australia across a range of topics related to the HPE learning area.

Topics of enquiry from individual teachers ranged from specific aspects of content such as swimming, nutrition and first aid to more general questions about time allocation, content, weightings and assessment rubrics. These enquiries were mainly from secondary teachers.

Enquiries from jurisdictions included requests for professional learning and/or feedback on local documents as well as parent requests for information and research. Other initiatives and reference groups sought support and advice. These ranged from Train Safety and Healthy Kids Club to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the Disaster Resilience Network. Several enquiries were also received from senior school and university students and parents to clarify curriculum content.

Technologies

The Australian Curriculum: Technologies (AC: T) was endorsed by Education Council in September 2015 and published on the Australian Curriculum website in October 2015 as version 8.0.

Education authorities in each state and territory determine the timelines for implementation of the Australian Curriculum in schools. Several states and territories implemented or trialled the Technologies curriculum and developed implementation plans during this latest monitoring cycle. It is anticipated that all jurisdictions will be implementing the curriculum in most band levels in 2018.

Implementation of the Technologies curriculum is being well-supported by government programs such as Coding Across the Curriculum, the National Innovation and Science Agenda initiatives and by universities and industry. National professional teacher associations continue to provide support for both Design and Technologies, and Digital Technologies.

Website analytics revealed that there were 111,000 pageviews of the Technologies subject curriculum. There were over 65,000 pageviews of version 7.5 for Design and Technologies and almost 66,000 for Digital Technologies. The most frequently visited pages were the landing page for each subject, followed by the rationale, introduction and PDF documents.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

As has been the case in previous consultations and during the Review of the Australian Curriculum in 2014, views on the Technologies achievement standards differ across states and territories. It is generally agreed that the sequencing and pitch are appropriate and that the achievement standards reflect the structure of the curriculum.

One state indicated that teachers prefer to use the subject-specific achievement standards rather than the learning area achievement standard. Teachers were concerned that the learning area achievement standard does not require an appropriate depth of learning and appears to prioritise Design and Technologies over Digital Technologies, as indicated by the proportion of achievement standard content. It was also noted that it may be difficult to develop assessment plans and tasks that adequately reflect the intent, as the learning area achievement standard is more generalised than the subject achievement standard. Some concerns were expressed about the verbs used in the achievement standards not aligning with verbs used in the content descriptions.

One teacher raised concerns over the two-subject structure of the Technologies curriculum, as it had a negative impact on the timing currently allocated to Design and Technologies.

The publication of the work sample portfolios was welcomed. Three states/territories have indicated that further support for implementing achievement standards, especially in terms of band level achievement standards, would assist teachers. Additional development of materials for the resource section of the website would also be appreciated.

The concerns raised in the previous two years were not reflected in the feedback from the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, which may indicate that the familiarity gained over time results in fewer concerns.

Media

There has been considerable media attention on the AC: T, particularly in relation to the Digital Technologies curriculum. Coding activities continue to receive attention in the media. Generally, this has been positive coverage, with some concerns expressed regarding the potential negative impact of excessive screen time on student health and wellbeing.

Website analytics revealed that there were 111,000 pageviews of the Technologies subject curriculum. There were over 65,000 pageviews of version 7.5 for Design and Technologies, and almost 66,000 for Digital Technologies. The most frequently visited pages were the curriculum for each subject, followed by the rationale, introduction and PDF documents.

The Australian Government sought advice from ACARA on the Government Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) – Australia 2016 for the section Food and Nutrition in education curricula in the Policy area: Support for communities.

Responses to enquiries

There have been few queries regarding the Australian Curriculum: Technologies. Most queries have been in relation to timelines for implementation and seeking support for how best to plan units of work. Those outside the teaching profession are most likely to ask if coding is part of the curriculum. There have been queries from the media, particularly about the Digital Technologies curriculum and how it will be addressed in schools.

Languages

The Australian Curriculum: Languages includes the development of a Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages and thirteen language-specific curricula.

Languages	Endorsed
Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish, Vietnamese	September 2015
Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages	December 2015
Hindi, Turkish	December 2015

Auslan and Classical Languages

In May 2014, the Australian Government announced funding for the development of languages, including curricula for Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and Classical Languages (with language-specific curricula for Latin and Classical Greek, and a Classical Languages Framework). Curriculum development began in May 2015.

The draft Years F–10 Australian Curriculum: Languages for Auslan and Years 7–10 Classical Languages were released for public consultation from 19 May to 8 August 2016. During the consultation period, ACARA conducted face-to-face consultation workshops with Deaf communities in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane (including video links to Townsville and Cairns), Adelaide and Darwin.

One of the key messages from the Auslan community consultation forums was that Deaf communities appreciate and value face-to-face consultation and appreciate ACARA's efforts to ensure that consultation on the draft Auslan Curriculum captured a Deaf perspective.

Google Analytics indicates that there were nearly 220,000 pageviews for the Languages curriculum, with the introduction, context statement for Japanese and the preamble being the most-viewed pages. The most-viewed pages were for Japanese, followed by Chinese, French, Italian, Indonesian and German.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

Discussions with state and territory languages specialists, professional associations and organisations, communities, schools and teachers indicate that the Australian Curriculum: Languages has attracted widespread interest. The Australian Federation of Modern Languages Teachers Associations (AFMLTA) reported that teachers were generally positive about the Australian Curriculum: Languages. The language-specific nature of the curriculum, which provides teachers and students with additional language-specific guidance and suggestions for rich learning experiences, has been identified as a particular strength.

The release of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages in December 2015 was highly commended by jurisdictions, professional organisations and community groups. Similarly, the release of the Hindi and Turkish curricula received strong community support.

Organisations such as First Languages Australia have expressed gratitude to ACARA for its commitment to the development of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages. They have identified the extent of consultation as a significant element of its development. A growing number of enquiries have come from language communities with regard to the Framework, focusing mainly on implementation, professional development for teachers and resourcing of language programs. Enquiries have also been made in relation to the development of language-specific exemplars to accompany the Framework.

The Framework has attracted international interest with the University of Wisconsin, which requested documentation to inform research they were conducting with Alaska's Yupik people.

In most instances, the achievement standards have been favourably received. There has been general acknowledgement that the achievement standards represent a sequence of increasing complexity, describe appropriate expectations for what students should know and can do at each band level and are appropriately aligned with the curriculum content for the particular band of schooling.

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) reported that some teachers find the achievement standards dense and wordy. A suggestion was made to remove the language-specific examples in order to reduce length and complexity, noting that examples are not provided in the achievement standards of other learning areas.

The ACT Department of Education's submission included a claim from some teachers that the achievement standards contain developmental errors. These have not been specified.

The AFMLTA also noted that some teachers find the holistic nature of the achievement standards difficult to understand. There has been no request for changes to the standards, but teachers have identified a need for professional learning support, particularly in relation to responding appropriately to learner diversity and differences in the way schools deliver programs.

Queensland's Department of Education and Training questioned the alignment between content descriptions and achievement standards in the Chinese curriculum, pointing out that the Reflecting sub-strand is not represented in the achievement standards of the Chinese curriculum as it is in other languages.

The organisation also expressed concern that the Languages design has been interpreted differently in the Chinese Second Language Learner Pathway (L2) compared to other curricula in the other languages. They have requested consistency in interpretation and alignment of the design.

They have also proposed that the interpretation of the Socialising sub-strand in Chinese L2, which currently limits communicative experiences to planning activities in most of the content descriptions, be broadened to include opportunities to exchange ideas, opinions, experiences, thoughts and feelings, as per the description of the sub-strand. They have made a similar request in relation to the Informing sub-strand in this curriculum; that it be interpreted more broadly as it is in the other languages curricula, to enable learners to present and use information drawn from their own experiences and prior knowledge.

The ACT has recommended that the original third strand, Reciprocity, be reinstated.

The AFMLTA's submission maintained that work samples in the Languages area should be language-specific. They argued that generic assessment tasks would not be adequate and could not reflect the characteristics of individual languages and that problems would arise if the same assessment instrument were used for romanised and non-romanised (or script-based) languages.

The AFMLTA particularly commended the online format of the curriculum and the flexibility this provides to users once they have mastered the navigational elements.

The most popular pages were for Japanese, Chinese and French; users also accessed the introduction page very frequently.

The Japanese curriculum received the highest number of pageviews, with more than twice the number of any other language. This probably reflects the number of schools teaching Japanese and the level of professional development being conducted across Australia in relation to the Australian Curriculum: Languages for Japanese.

Media

Much of the media interest has related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, such as the role of school programs in revitalising some of these languages. Media coverage extended to bilingualism, impending closure of longstanding community language programs in schools and issues around the retention of students studying languages to Year 12.

Responses to enquiries

Numerous enquiries have been received relating to challenges associated with reporting against the achievement standards, especially given the differences between programs in terms of hours of instruction and entry points.

Enquiries have also been received from teachers in relation to the urgent need for work samples in the Languages area.

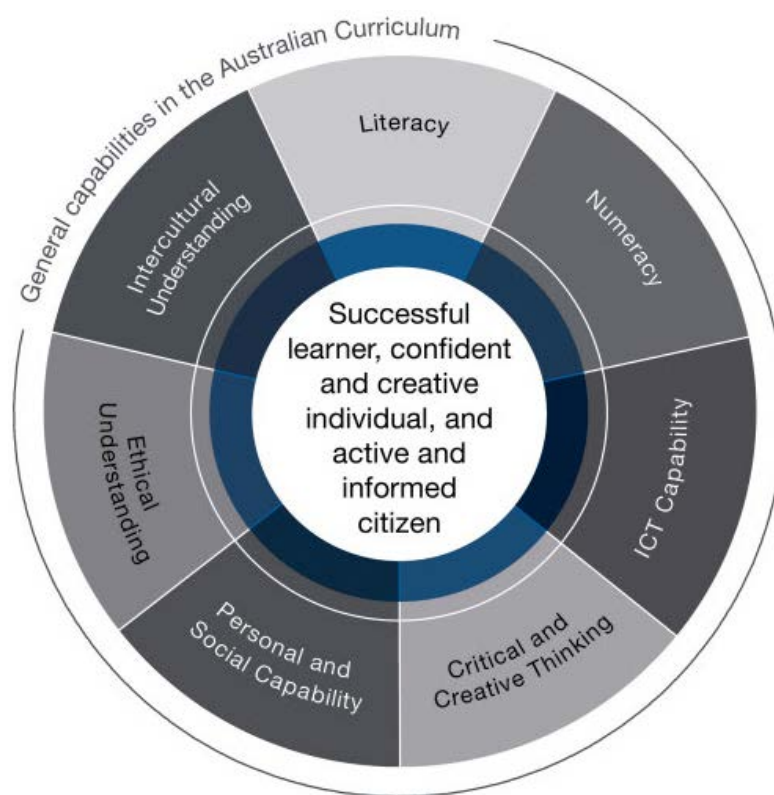
Most other enquiries related to implementation issues, including the compulsory nature of languages education, entry points to programs and various state and territory jurisdiction initiatives. A smaller number of enquiries related to the degree of difficulty of different language and the development of senior secondary curricula for languages.

d. General capabilities

During the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, this key component of the three-dimensional Australian Curriculum attracted increasing interest. The general capabilities encompass a range of skills and attributes identified as critical for young Australians to develop as they prepare to enter an increasingly globalised world.

The general capabilities reflect the spirit of the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians, intending that:

“All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.” (MCEETYA, 2008)



(ACARA, 2014)

The Australian Curriculum identifies the general capabilities as Literacy, Numeracy, ICT Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding. Through the integration and embedding of these within and across learning areas, educators provide opportunities for young people to develop and master these capabilities.

In other countries and school systems, these capabilities are referred to variously as transversal competencies, non-cognitive skills, soft skills, cross-cutting skills, interdisciplinary skills and 21st century skills.

The general capabilities can be used to enable students with diverse needs to access curriculum content appropriate to their age and year level and to extend and enrich their learning. They provide opportunities for students with disability to engage in age-appropriate activities that personalise the learning area for them. They can be used to ensure deeper learning for gifted and talented students and to enable students whose first language is not English (EAL/D) to access curriculum content at the appropriate year level.

The 'Student diversity' section of the Australian Curriculum website provides guidance and examples to support schools and educators to improve the learning of all students. The information provided on the overview page for each section explains that the general capabilities are not to be regarded as an alternative curriculum. Instead, they enable educators to personalise learning. For each identified set of learners, there are illustrations of practice that explain the approaches taken by different schools.

Each of the general capabilities includes a continuum that articulates learning expectations at key levels for Foundation, Year 2, Year 4, Year 6, Year 8 and Year 10. These continua support educators to make decisions and judgements relating to student learning and achievement. They also enable educators to plan and innovate within and across learning areas. The continua for Literacy, Numeracy and Personal and Social Capability have additional levels to enable educators to cater for the learning needs of students who are developing communication and expressive language skills.

During the recent monitoring cycle, nearly 875,000 pageviews were recorded for the general capabilities pages, with Literacy being the most popular choice, followed by Information and Communication Technology Capability, Personal and Social Capability, and Numeracy.

Key points

Jurisdictional feedback

All states and territories were invited to comment on the quality and validity of the general capabilities as part of the jurisdictional feedback process. Responses included recommendations and requests relating to additional resourcing to support the embedding of the capabilities in classroom practice.

Responses were generally very positive in relation to the increased use and embedding of the general capabilities in learning and teaching programs, although there was evidence of wide variation in the level of take-up and practice.

Most submissions referred to the importance of the general capabilities; in general, jurisdictions described them as valid and effective ways of enhancing teaching and learning. Respondents were also positive about the appropriateness of the age and stage content and sequencing of the learning continua. The capabilities were viewed as essential for supporting the teaching of 21st century skills and dispositions. Additionally, the general capabilities were regarded as an effective means of making connections across learning areas.

The Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) submission stated that the pastoral care/wellbeing programs of independent schools draw heavily on the Personal and Social Capability, particularly through religious education offerings. Similarly, the Intercultural Understanding capability may be used as a means of celebrating the diversity of students, including overseas students. The ISQ response queried the notion of the capabilities being

embedded within the Australian Curriculum's learning areas, believing this to be inconsistent and inconsequential. Further concerns were the discrepancy in the level of detail provided within the learning continua across the seven capabilities, particularly as this may influence the perceptions of teachers regarding the importance of literacy and numeracy relative to the others.

Concerns were raised regarding the language used to describe aspects of the general capabilities. Some respondents felt that the language did not reflect the learning area content, especially regarding the relationship between the ICT Capability and the Australian Curriculum: Technologies, where a perceived lack of alignment in the use of verbs could lead to misinterpretations.

The additional levels within Literacy, Numeracy, and Personal and Social Capability were acknowledged as being effective in enabling educators to cater for the needs of students with additional learning needs. Some jurisdictions stated that in many cases these additional levels were viewed as an alternate curriculum, particularly as the English and Mathematics curricula did not include statements to cater for learning prior to Foundation. A concern was raised regarding the labelling of the additional levels and the confusion of having multiple descriptors for Foundation across the general capabilities. Several submissions pointed to the lack of consistency of the additional levels across the capabilities.

There was positive feedback regarding the use of icons to help teachers to identify key general capabilities within learning areas. Jurisdictions also recommended that icons be hyperlinked to additional information on specific content descriptions and elaborations within learning areas. One authority highlighted the effectiveness of this in specific learning areas such as HASS, The Arts and Technologies and called for this level of identification to be extended into other learning areas. This identification of general capability icons was useful for educators in the initial stages of planning. However, it was noted that the links are not always clear within learning areas, nor are the capabilities of Ethical Understanding or Intercultural Understanding always evident within the learning areas.

The Tasmanian submission included concerns about the usability of the Australian Curriculum website, explaining that this may inhibit educators' engagement with the general capabilities. It was also requested that the general capabilities be presented more prominently on the homepage of the Australian Curriculum website as a way of highlighting the importance of this key dimension.

Others mentioned concerns that any references to the general capabilities within learning areas may be seen as a 'tick box' activity. This could be as a result of educators remaining focused on the content of the learning areas and lacking confidence in their capacity to teach this dimension of the curriculum. Another submission referred to confusion about the way in which the three dimensions of the curriculum were intended to complement each other.

Submissions from Queensland (Department of Education and Training) and Association of Independent Schools South Australia (AISSA) identified a need for more emphasis on entrepreneurial skills, with the suggestion that this aspect of 21st century learning could be expanded within the Personal and Social Capability. Jurisdictions also reported that schools and educators were increasingly focusing on notions of innovation, developing the skills and dispositions of entrepreneurship, collaboration and resilience; their view was that these lacked prominence in the Australian Curriculum's learning areas and should be strengthened within the capabilities.

The resources associated with each general capability's landing page – especially the 'within the learning area' documents and the continua – were praised as useful tools for educators to access when planning. Several jurisdictions requested the development of illustrations of practice that focused on learner engagement, differentiation and personalised learning. They claimed that such illustrations would provide clarity around the purpose of the general capabilities and more support in terms of demonstrating ways of engaging learners, including those from a wide range of backgrounds.

Most jurisdictions indicated support for the use of Literacy, Numeracy, ICT and Personal and Social Capability in teachers' planning, but many emphasised the need to raise the profile of Ethical Understanding, Critical and Creative Thinking and Intercultural Understanding.

There were requests for the development of work samples to guide educators on the embedding of specific capabilities within a learning area. The point was made that these work samples should be included on the learning area pages rather than housed within the general capabilities section of the website. There was also a request for work samples in Literacy and Numeracy that would be applicable to learning areas other than English and Mathematics.

The submissions delivered mixed responses regarding the development of assessment and reporting practices relating to the general capabilities. One education authority raised a question about a possibility of having specific aspects of the general capabilities built into the achievement standards within learning areas. In several jurisdictions, educators were already routinely assessing and reporting to parents on aspects of the general capabilities. Other respondents felt that this was unnecessary.

One submission called for a move away from traditional, subject-based orientation to an explicit focus on teaching, assessing and reporting of the general capabilities. A related recommendation was for a more detailed continuum to be developed in each of the general capabilities.

Jurisdictions also identified a desire for additional information to be provided to support parents and carers about different ways of working with students and the contribution that could come from the general capabilities.

Media

Throughout the 2015–16 monitoring cycle, a range of articles in the media addressed the key concepts and skills identified within the Australian Curriculum: General Capabilities. These articles were wide in scope and affirmed the importance of the general capabilities for schools.

Articles that addressed 21st century skills consistently highlighted the need to prepare young people for a workplace, with many occupations yet to be identified. Skills such as communication, creativity, critical thinking, team work, digital literacy and global citizenship were all discussed as skills for the future. Personal skills were consistently quoted as crucial for success in education and in future employment (Chang, 2015). One article focused on the need for Australia's education system to embrace the innovations occurring around the world in order to prepare young Australians to play a 'relevant role on the world stage as knowledge leaders' (Imig & Fischetti, 2015).

Much of the media coverage associated with the capabilities of Literacy and Numeracy focused on the English and Mathematics learning areas and incorporated discussion relating to NAPLAN and the literacy and numeracy standards of young Australians.

Articles on the Information Communication and Technology Capability focused on coding, particularly in relation to collaborative and problem-solving skills (Parker, 2015). There was commentary on the decline in the digital literacy standards evidenced in the NAP Digital Literacy Report. One article presented several reasons for the decline, including delays in the rollout of the curriculum, lack of teacher skill and experience, the wide variety of choice of digital devices and tests which assessed outdated skills (Phillips, 2015).

Media references to the Critical and Creative Thinking Capability covered the importance of extending students' learning beyond subject-specific topics and developing higher-order skills. There was some discussion relating to the publication of capabilities which have been incorporated into the Victorian Curriculum. These differ from those of the Australian Curriculum in their inclusion of content descriptions and achievement standards for Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding and Personal and Social Capability. The article focused on the validity of assessing these aspects of the curriculum and the ability of educators to do so (Frawley, 2016).

The Australian Curriculum's Personal and Social Capability was highlighted in the media through a piece on the positive outcomes for students at a Victorian primary school; the school had implemented a Social and Emotional Learning program. The article examined the impact of the school's explicit focus on teaching self-awareness, self-care and emotional management strategies (Tsvirko, 2015).

The capability of Ethical Understanding received media attention in relation to a report on a 2014 trial of ethics classes in Victorian schools by the Humanist Society of Victoria (Cook, 2015).

Responses to enquiries

ACARA has received few queries about the general capabilities during this monitoring cycle. Most focused on the development of the general capabilities and the evidence base used during the development of the Australian Curriculum.

e. Cross-Curriculum Priorities

The inclusion of the cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian Curriculum was endorsed by all education ministers in December 2010. ACARA's subsequent involvement with international organisations and curriculum development surveys, including the OECD and UNESCO studies, has indicated that the inclusion of this dimension is appropriate and useful for students in Australian education settings.

The three cross-curriculum priorities are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia
- Sustainability.

Key points

Learning areas and subjects endorsed during the monitoring cycle have been tagged for the relevance of their content to each of the cross-curriculum priorities.

Monitoring of the priorities continued throughout 2015–16, with evidence from website analytics showing that users across all stages of schooling F–10 and across all states and territories have been accessing cross-curriculum priority information. Despite an overall decrease in pageviews for the Australian Curriculum, pageviews of the cross-curriculum priorities have increased significantly. The overall increase for this dimension of the Australian Curriculum was 16 per cent; the Sustainability priority saw an increase in pageviews of 26 per cent.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures priority received approximately twice as many pageviews as Sustainability and more than three times that of Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia. The pageviews for each discrete cross-curriculum priority ranked above the total number of pageviews for the cross-curriculum priority within learning areas, suggesting that visitors are seeking more specific information than that tagged in the learning area subject content.

While feedback received from stakeholders on the cross-curriculum priorities has been very limited, the comments that have been received continue to be generally positive and supportive of this dimension's inclusion in the Australian Curriculum.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-Curriculum Priority

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training has commissioned ACARA to develop illustrations of practice for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Priority as a way of improving teacher engagement with the priority for Foundation – Year 10. A detailed project plan has been developed. Schools that use the priorities successfully have been identified and invited to participate in the production of videos that will tell the story of each school community's approaches to teaching and learning of the priority. Work on this priority has been accompanied by a set of guiding principles for teachers and schools to support their understanding.

Publication of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages in December 2015 explicitly supported this priority, with the framework providing access to all Aboriginal languages. The framework consists of pathways for students from a

range of language backgrounds and encourages and supports the development of programs for languages used in daily communication by a community or languages being revived.

ACARA has worked with Reconciliation Australia to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. During the development of the plan, the Collaboration and Innovation Group in Curriculum was established to support and develop curriculum officers' cultural competency in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in learning areas.

There continued to be concern from ACARA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education advisory group about the representation of the cross-curriculum priority in the content descriptions of the Australian Curriculum in English, Mathematics, Science and Technologies. A working group has been formed to consider ways of strengthening the priority across learning areas.

Jurisdictional feedback

While feedback received from stakeholders on the cross-curriculum priority has been negligible, one comment suggested that the three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum 'coupled with the pressure for basic skills testing, assessment and reporting may lead to an overcrowded experience for teachers and children.' Another comment suggested that there was a challenge in representing a priority based on a cultural knowledge system that was not congruent with the Western discipline-based knowledge of the achievement standards.

Media

Media commentary was predominantly neutral for the priority, with some positive reporting particularly during NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week. A small number of articles referred to the terminology used in the curriculum, reflecting the debate about 'invasion' and 'settlement' of Australia.

f. Student Diversity

The three-dimensional design of the Australian Curriculum, comprising learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, is the practical expression of ACARA's commitment to improving the learning of all young Australians. It is intended to be a curriculum for all learners, made accessible to all in ways that respond to students' needs and interests.

Throughout the monitoring cycle, ACARA has worked with education authorities and schools to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, cognisant of the diversity of learners, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students for whom English is an additional language or dialect
- students from rural and remote contexts
- students from low socio-economic settings
- students with disability.

Feedback from a range of stakeholders indicated dissatisfaction with the 'Student diversity' section of the Australian Curriculum website. The redevelopment of the website will enable the delivery of the Australian Curriculum via an in-house platform that is contemporary and

flexible in both design and usability. Feedback on the 'Student diversity' section has been a critical element in this project.

The appointment of a curriculum specialist, general capabilities, has also enabled direct support for professional learning in this area. This role supports jurisdictions in relation to catering for the full range of learners. A project to redevelop the Australian Curriculum website offers the facility to highlight the three-dimensional aspect of the Australian Curriculum, including the general capabilities.

In the QCAA response, special education teachers commented positively on being able to use some of the general capabilities as organisers for learning programs. In particular, the general capabilities of Literacy, Numeracy and Personal and Social Capability were 'seen as key enablers for providing access to the learning area content for students with severe/profound intellectual disability and/or multiple impairment'. However, the point was made that the 'explanation of how to use the additional levels of the general capabilities to personalise learning is only found on the 'Student diversity' page.' Therefore, many teachers are unaware that additional levels at Level 1 have been developed for the general capabilities of Literacy, Numeracy and Personal and Social Capability'.

The response from the South Australian Department of Education and Child Development, included a teacher comment that considered the general capabilities and their continua as 'particularly helpful for students on learning plans – speech and language needs', rather than using eight different learning areas to create an individual learning plan.

The 2016 Cross Sectoral Submission from the Australian Capital Territory emphasised the need to ensure that the Australian Curriculum caters for 'learners with exceptional needs at both ends of the learning spectrum' and suggested that ACARA provide 'nationally consistent expectations for students identified as gifted or talented in each subject area'. Further, the achievement standards were considered insufficiently detailed to 'show progress for students with moderate to severe disabilities'. The conclusion was that some students would not be able to demonstrate progression against the achievement standards because of the lack of specificity; the submission quoted a stakeholder as believing that 'this is incredibly disheartening for our parent population'.

ACARA's Students With Disability Advisory Group (SWDAG) has been closely involved with the production of illustrations of practice that will support teachers in their work with students who have a range of disabilities. Filming took place in four different jurisdictions during 2016 and the videos will be available on the Australian Curriculum website.

8. Conclusion

The 2015 Monitoring Report (p. 5) pointed to the 'forthcoming period of curriculum consolidation, with a focus on provision of additional resource to improve understanding, use of and access to the Australian Curriculum...', recommending the collection of targeted feedback from jurisdictions to enhance ACARA's annual monitoring and evaluation process. This recommendation was reflected in the request to jurisdictions in the subsequent monitoring cycle that they include a particular focus on the effectiveness of the achievement standards and the general capabilities. The key findings from this focus in 2015–16 are:

- The Australian Curriculum, with its three dimensions, is being implemented by jurisdictions in ways that reflect their context.

- The Australian Curriculum website received positive commentary, with some suggestions for improvements regarding ease of navigation and print functionality.
- The achievement standards received some negative commentary, particularly in relation to their 'holistic' design, inconsistent structure and varied scope.
- Schools and teachers require support and resources to assist their understanding of the achievement standards.
- The general capabilities are highly valued for their capacity to complement the learning areas and to enrich the learning experiences of students from diverse backgrounds and of diverse ability.
- Schools and teachers require support and resources to assist their understanding of the purpose and use of the general capabilities, and they would welcome the development of more illustrations of practice.

9. References

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Appendices

A. Federal, state and territory curriculum and school authorities

ACT Education Directorate, on behalf of Department of Education, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT and Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Association of Independent Schools of South Australia

Australian Government Department of Education and Training

NSW Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards

NSW Department of Education

NT Department of Education

Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority

Queensland Department of Education

Independent Schools Qld (ISQ)

SA Department for Education and Child Development (DECD)

Steiner Education Australia

Tasmania Department of Education

B. Professional associations

Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFLMTA)

Australian Secondary Principals Association (ASPA)

Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA)