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The key features of the draft senior secondary Australian Curriculum for history

History is a discipline of inquiry into the past that stimulates students' curiosity and imagination. It develops understanding of cultural, social and political events, processes and issues that have shaped humanity from earliest times to the present. The draft senior secondary Australian Curriculum for history consists of two courses: Ancient History and Modern History.

The draft history curriculum for the senior years is further organised into two strands within each course:

- **Historical knowledge and understanding:** includes the people, places, societies and events of the past, the diversity of past ways of life, and factors affecting change and continuity in human affairs. Historical understanding as a strand will be developed through concepts that define history as a discipline, including the use of evidence, investigating continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability.
- **Historical skills:** includes skills that are used in the process of historical inquiry associated with historical questions and research; the analysis and use of sources; perspectives and interpretations; and comprehending and communicating a range of information. There is an emphasis on the development of informed and defensible responses to inquiry questions through a critical use of sources, and by evaluating different interpretations.

The Ancient History and Modern History courses consist of four semester length units.

In Ancient History, Unit 1 *Investigating ancient history* is designed as an introductory unit. For Unit 2, a choice is available between Unit 2a *Representing and interpreting the ancient past* and Unit 2b *Ancient lives*. Unit 3 is *Ancient people, power and politics*. Unit

4 *Ancient societies, sites and sources* is designed as a concluding unit to the course. In studying Units 3 and 4, students must study at least two of the following areas: Egypt, Near East, Asia, Greece and Rome.

In Modern History, Unit 1 *Investigating modern history* is designed as an introductory unit. For Unit 2, a choice is available between Unit 2a *The nation-state and national identity* and 2b *Recognition and equality*. For Unit 3, there is a choice between Unit 3a *International tensions and conflicts* and Unit 3b *Revolutions*. Unit 4 *Asia and Australia, 1937-2000* has been designed as a concluding unit to the course.

The purpose and nature of each senior secondary history course and the links to K-10 Australian Curriculum

The Ancient History curriculum, from prehistory to 500 CE, will equip students with the skills to deal with written and archaeological sources and conflicting interpretations. It will enhance students' understanding of the individuals, groups and forces that shaped the ancient world (Egypt, Near East, Asia, Greece, Rome). The Ancient History curriculum also contributes to an understanding of changing interpretations and issues related to the ethical study, ownership and conservation of the past.

The Modern History curriculum, from the late eighteenth century through to the end of the twentieth century, will equip students with the skills to evaluate how the modern past has been represented, and the significance of events, movements, individuals and groups that have shaped the modern world. It will enhance students' understanding of revolution and conflict, and continuing efforts to secure world peace. The Modern History curriculum also contributes to an understanding of Asian societies and Australia's engagement with Asia.

Both the senior years' history courses continue to develop student learning in history through the same strands that form the K-10 history curriculum.

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The *historical knowledge and understanding* strand in the Ancient History curriculum places a greater emphasis on world history and includes a wider range of concepts and contexts for historical study. There is particular attention to the methods of archaeologists and historians, the impact of individuals in ancient times, and the evidence for how people lived in ancient societies.

The *historical knowledge and understanding* strand in the Modern History curriculum continues to develop the history of Australia and the modern world studied at Years 9 and 10. There is particular attention to World War I, the history of other nations, tensions and conflicts of international significance, revolutionary change, and Asian and Australian history.

In the *historical skills* strand there are four sub-strands that continue to be developed from K-10 through to the Ancient History and Modern History curriculum. These are: historical questions and research, analysis and use of sources, perspectives and interpretations, and comprehension and communication. There is a greater emphasis on skills associated with critical thinking and analysis of sources, and the contestability of historical interpretation.

The Ancient History and Modern History courses are relevant to students with a wide range of backgrounds and pathways, including those who wish to move on to advanced studies in academic disciplines, professions and technical trades. The study of both these courses develops personal attributes highly valued in contemporary society, including critical thinking, intercultural sensitivity and the ability to make evidence-based judgments.

How are the general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions addressed within the draft Australian Curriculum: History in the senior years?

The draft senior secondary curriculum for history explicitly addresses the following seven general capabilities: literacy, numeracy, Information and

Communication Technologies (ICT), thinking skills, creativity, intercultural understanding, and ethical behaviour. Each of these is embedded in the content descriptions where appropriate.

There are also opportunities within history to develop the general capabilities of social competence, teamwork and self-management with an appropriate choice of activities by the teacher.

The cross-curriculum dimensions are explicitly included in the content descriptions of the *Historical knowledge and understanding* strand.

The Indigenous history and culture dimension includes the longevity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history, for example, through the study of significant Australian archaeological sites and what they reveal about the past, and struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for recognition and equality.

The dimension related to Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia includes the history of Asia in ancient times, the beliefs and values of Asian societies, and the history of Australia's engagement with Asia in the modern period.

The dimension of sustainability is evident in the study of agricultural systems of the ancient world, the use of technology to control the environment, and the environmental consequences of technological change in modern times.

What national comparisons and/or international references have been identified in developing the Australian Curriculum: History in the senior years?

Current Australian history curriculum documents have been taken into account during development of the draft senior secondary history curriculum, with the following points noted about differences and similarities between the draft Australian curriculum and current state and territory curricula:

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- There are some variations in scope, sequencing and emphasis between the draft Australian senior secondary history curriculum and existing state and territory curricula. (The Ancient History and Modern History curricula broadly reflect the range of content offered in current state and territory curricula.)
- There is more emphasis on the concept of contestability and issues of historiography in the draft Australian curriculum for Ancient and Modern History. This is in response to concern reflected in international research that students view the past as unproblematic. There is an emphasis on the provisional nature of historical interpretation in the introductory units for each course in particular, and also in the skills.
- The number of options within each unit is broadly consistent with most state and territory curricula.

Key international reference points that have guided the development of the senior secondary history curriculum have been history curricula primarily from the United Kingdom, Finland, the USA and Singapore with the following points noted:

- The draft senior secondary ancient and modern history courses have a broader scope of contexts for historical study than most international curricula, particularly the United Kingdom.
- The strand *historical knowledge and understanding* includes a wider range of concepts that constitute the discipline of history than is commonly found in most international history curricula. These concepts are drawn from the latest research in the field of historical thinking, including the work of Peter Seixas, Sam Wineburg, Stephane Levesque, Jannet van Drie and Carla van Boxtel.