

Curriculum Design

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1 Purpose.....	3
1.2 Related documents.....	3
2. THE CONTEXT FOR AN AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM.....	4
3. ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM.....	5
3.1 Curriculum Content.....	5
3.2 Achievement Standards.....	5
3.3 Reporting framework.....	6
4. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM.....	7
4.1 Nature of the learner and learning.....	7
4.2 The whole curriculum.....	9
4.3 Structural matters.....	10
4.4 Inclusivity.....	11
4.5 General capabilities.....	13
4.6 Cross-curriculum perspectives.....	15
5. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS: K-10.....	16
5.1 Rationale.....	16
5.2 Aims.....	16
5.3 Organisation of the <learning area> curriculum.....	16
5.4 Curriculum Content.....	17
5.5 Achievement Standards.....	21
5.6 General capabilities.....	23
5.7 Cross-curriculum perspectives.....	23
5.8 Links to other learning areas.....	24
6. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS: SENIOR SECONDARY YEARS.....	25
6.1 Rationale.....	25
6.2 Aims.....	25
6.3 Organisation of learning.....	25
6.4 Curriculum Content.....	26
6.5 Assessment.....	27
6.6 Achievement Standards.....	27
6.7 General capabilities.....	28

Amendment History

Date	Version	Comment
18 May	1.0	Approved by the ACARA Board (21-22 May)
05 November	2.0	Amended to include changes approved by the ACARA Board (6-7 October); separation of specification for K-10 and senior secondary; update on achievement standards.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This document provides background information to guide the writing of the first two phases of national curriculum (English, mathematics, science, history, geography, languages and the arts) and includes instructions to writers on specific actions that they need to take in the drafting of the curriculum.

The document will be revised from time to time, taking account of issues that have arisen during the curriculum development process and/or as the scope of national curriculum changes.

1.2 Related documents

This document, on technical matters related to the development of the national curriculum, should be read in conjunction with other key documents, namely:

- The Shape of the Australian Curriculum
- The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English
- The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics
- The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Sciences
- The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History
- The National Curriculum Development Process
- National Curriculum in the Senior Secondary Years – Position Paper

2. THE CONTEXT FOR AN AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment

Curriculum will be designed to develop successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

State, Territory and Commonwealth governments will work together with all school sectors to ensure world-class curriculum in Australia. Together the national curriculum and curriculum specified at the State, Territory and local levels will enable every student to develop:

- *A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built*
- *Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications*
- *General capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise*

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians December 2008

Building Australia's future

Education plays an important part in forming the young people who will take responsibility for Australia in the future. If it is to play this part effectively, education must address the intellectual, personal and social development of young Australians, and it must do so at a time when ideas about the goals of education are changing, and will continue to change.

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum May 2009

A curriculum for the 21st century will reflect an understanding and acknowledgment of the changing nature of young people as learners and the challenges and demands that will continue to shape their learning in the future. Young people will need a wide and adaptive set of skills to meet the changing expectations of society and to contribute to the creation of a more productive, sustainable and just society.

Curriculum is only one element that influences how well young Australians are prepared for their futures by their education, but it is important because it sets the level of expectation of their learning. High-performing countries set high expectations. They support the fulfilment of those expectations with high-quality teaching, school and system leadership, and commitment and support from families, communities, business and industry. Providing high quality education is valuable to the community at large, and justifies people's investments of time, effort and resources.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM K-12

The national curriculum will be developed as a web-based document i.e. using web technologies to embed links and enable multiple views and access. The three key elements of the national curriculum will be curriculum content, achievement standards and a reporting framework. While these three elements are described separately in this document, they will be published together as a whole, integrated package.

The curriculum content, achievement standards and reporting framework will be presented with other information that sets the context for what is to be taught. This information will be presented in the following sections.

- Rationale
- Aims of the learning area
- Organisation of the <learning area> curriculum
- General capabilities
- Cross-curriculum dimensions

3.1 Curriculum Content

Curriculum content identifies what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn. Curriculum content includes knowledge, skills and understanding that students are expected to learn and will be described for a particular learning area at a particular year level (for example, Mathematics, Year 5).

For K-10, curriculum content will be presented as 'content descriptions' outlining what students are expected to learn and teachers are expected to teach at each year level. K-10 content descriptions will be accompanied by 'content elaborations' which will illustrate and/or clarify the detail of the content descriptions.

For the senior secondary years, curriculum content will be presented as detailed content descriptions only.

3.2 Achievement Standards

Achievement standards will describe the quality of learning students should typically demonstrate in relation to the content by a particular point in their schooling (that is, the depth of their understanding, the extent of their knowledge and the sophistication of their skills).

Achievement standards will be designed to support reporting to students and parents and to aid consistency of assessment and reporting across states and territories.

K-10

Achievement standards will describe the *quality* of learning (depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill) expected of students at each year level from Kindergarten to Year 10. The set of achievement standards should present a continuum of typical growth expected of students across the years of schooling K-10.

Each achievement standard will make explicit the quality of learning necessary for students to be well able to progress to the next level. Each K–10 achievement standard will be aligned with a C level on the reporting framework.

For each learning area (or strand of learning area as necessary) each achievement standard will comprise a description of the quality of expected learning, and a set of annotated work samples that illustrates the described quality of learning.

Senior secondary years

For the senior secondary years, course-specific achievement standards will be developed. They will provide an expectation of the quality of learning that students should typically demonstrate (that is, the depth of their understanding, the extent of their knowledge and the sophistication of their skills).

The achievement standards will provide a 5 point scale for describing how well a student has achieved what they were expected to learn in a course. Work samples will illustrate typical learning in relation to the five levels of achievement.

They will be designed to be applicable in jurisdictions with external examinations and with school-based assessment.

3.3 Reporting framework

In conjunction with the development of curriculum content and achievement standards, the national curriculum will provide a consistent nomenclature to describe the quality of achievement associated with each A–E grade for use across K–10. These descriptors will be generic across year levels and learning areas.

Each K–10 achievement standard will be aligned with a C level on this reporting framework.

A D level on the reporting framework describes a quality of learning that is adequate for progression but may indicate the student will need additional support or assistance in progressing within the next level.

Additional work samples, which illustrate achievement well above and well below the achievement standard, will be provided to teachers to assist them to make on-balance judgements of A, B, D and E standards of achievement.

4. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM K-12

This section provides directions to writers on the actions that should be taken during the process of curriculum writing.

In particular, curriculum writers will consider the following.

- **The nature of the learner and learning**, including consideration of how the national curriculum will take into account the developmental changes in young people attending school.
- The **whole curriculum** and how national curriculum learning areas relate to it.
- **Structural matters**, including commencement and completion of school and transition points.
- **Inclusivity** and how the national curriculum will provide for the educational needs of every child.
- **General capabilities**, describing how the national curriculum will attend to general capabilities learning.
- **Cross-curriculum dimensions**, describing perspectives that should be included in each learning area.

This section will consider how each of these matters will influence development of national curriculum with specific attention to:

- a summary of key considerations from national and jurisdictional perspectives
- specific actions to be taken in curriculum development to address the matter.

4.1 Nature of the learner and learning

4.1.a Key considerations

The national curriculum will detail what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn for each year of schooling. The curriculum will describe the knowledge, skills and understanding that students will be expected to develop for each learning area across the years of schooling. This description of curriculum content will result in a curriculum sequence that will represent what is known about the progression of learning in that area.

Teachers understand the developmental diversity in the students they teach and are responsible for organising learning opportunities to meet individual learning needs. Organising the curriculum by year level will help teachers do this and will reduce the risk of repetition of content from year to year as students change teachers or schools.

While the curriculum will be described by years, its organisation and presentation will take account of changing developmental characteristics of students across K–12.

There are varied views and practices about the best way to organise the curriculum into phases or stages, but there is general agreement that the curriculum should not predetermine the instructional approach to be taken by teachers and should provide some flexibility for them to accommodate different levels of student development and achievement and approaches to learning.

Writing of the national curriculum will take account of the following characteristics of the learner and learning within four overlapping age bands.

The curriculum for students between **5 and 8 years of age** (typically Years K–2) will give priority to foundational skills, knowledge and understanding that all children are expected to achieve to enhance their opportunities for continued learning, with priority to English and literacy and mathematics and numeracy.

The curriculum will build on the national Early Years Learning Framework and will be designed to accommodate the varied learning experiences that children experience prior to school. The curriculum will also accommodate and value the diverse social and cultural backgrounds and experiences that children bring to school.

A natural curiosity about their world and desire to make sense of it provides a platform for them to construct and review their school learning through interactions with others, through experimentation, practice and play in the classroom and beyond. This will assist them to make sense of a world that is outside their immediate experience, as they connect new knowledge with what they already know or believe. This should also provide an opportunity to sometimes challenge what they know or believe.

The curriculum for students between **8 and 12 years of age** (typically Years 3–6/7) will be increasingly organised through distinct learning areas, while also seeking to highlight and promote links between learning areas to deepen knowledge and understanding. While maintaining a priority on English and literacy and mathematics and numeracy, the curriculum will provide children with core learning across all agreed learning areas.

In this age group, children begin to better understand and appreciate different points of view and can maintain engagement with tasks for longer periods of time. Thought processes become more logical and consistent, and they gradually become more independent learners. In the later years of this range students are becoming more self conscious of their abilities and appearance, more aware of the consequences of their behaviour and are developing an awareness of justice and fair play.

The curriculum for students between **12 and 15 years of age** (typically Years 7/8 –10) will provide a broad general education, organised around core learning areas while offering opportunities for students to select additional areas of study matched to their interests and needs.

The curriculum will continue to provide teachers with opportunities to deeply engage students by ensuring that the curriculum content is presented in ways that challenge student knowledge and understanding through contexts that are meaningful and relevant to them. Students in this age range increasingly look for and value learning that is perceived as relevant, is consistent with personal goals, and/or leads to important outcomes.

The transition from primary to secondary school coincides with a range of significant physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. Students often begin to question established conventions, practices and values. Their interests extend well beyond their own communities and they begin to develop concerns about wider issues.

The curriculum for students between **16 and 18 years of age** (typically Years 11 and 12) will provide students with increased opportunities to make choices about pathways through school and beyond. These choices will be informed by previous success and enjoyment, future options for training, learning or employment, and the setting in which the learning is to occur. Increasingly, young people in this age range have already been in part-time employment or will take up part-time jobs while undertaking their senior secondary schooling.

The senior school curriculum will offer more opportunities for specialisation in learning, including within discipline areas and through Vocational Education and Training. Some students may require a tailored senior secondary learning program that focuses on achieving satisfactory levels of literacy and numeracy and work-related skills. Others will require programs of learning at an advanced level of engagement with the subject matter.

In this period of transition to adulthood, students have a clearer sense of their strengths, interests and goals. They begin to see themselves as active players in community life and are often concerned about major social and environmental issues and the ethical implications of human activity and knowledge.

4.1.b Actions to be taken

- While written on a year-by-year basis, the curriculum will need to acknowledge that, in any one year group, there will be a significant range of achievement. Curriculum documents will be written in a way that assists teachers to identify and respond to this range of achievement.
- Specific directions are included in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum papers.
- The curriculum writing process will include provision of advice and review of documents by advisory panel members with expertise across the K–12 range to ensure the appropriateness of curriculum content and expectations of achievement.

4.2 The whole curriculum

4.2.a Key considerations

In developing national curriculum for particular learning areas the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* is a key reference point. The second goal is that 'All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' and the declaration states that curriculum will be designed to develop such learners. The declaration, at p13, also proposes that national curriculum (and state or territory and local curriculum) will develop the following.

- A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built
- Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications
- General capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise.

The national curriculum documents will indicate how learning in each area contributes to the national goals and the agreed features of a quality curriculum. This advice will assist teachers to see the whole curriculum, and how learning in each national curriculum area contributes to the whole. The whole view of curriculum, of course, includes state/territory and school developed curriculum.

To assist writers to develop curriculum content which fits within and relates to an overall view of curriculum, guidance is provided on time allocations for each learning area. Such an approach is not designed to establish time allocations for education systems and sectors, schools or teachers. Rather, it is a design assumption about relative emphasis given to subjects and is intended to guide writers on the teaching/learning time that they can assume as they write the curriculum.

The advice has no purpose other than to act as a criterion for the development of national curriculum documents. Schools and school authorities will be able to take more or less time than the design time considered below when implementing the curriculum.

4.2.b Actions to be taken

- The national curriculum documents will indicate how learning in each area contributes to the national goals. This will be presented as a particular reference in the rationale for each learning area document.
- Writers of curriculum content will be guided by the following time allocations. These notional time allocations are to guide the first stage of curriculum writing – further consideration will be given to allocations for the other learning areas as the second phase of national curriculum development commences.

	Years K–2	Years 3–6	Year 7	Years 8–10
English	7 hours/week	6 hours/week	4 hours/week	4 hours/week
Mathematics	5 hours/week	5 hours/week	4 hours/week	4 hours/week
Science	1 hour/week	2 hours/week	3 hours/week	4 hours/week
History	½ hour/week	1 hour/week	2 hours/week	2 hours/week

- Curriculum writers will provide advice within curriculum documents about the design time for sub-sections of the curriculum.

4.3 Structural matters

4.3.a Key considerations

The Australian states and territories have different structural arrangements for organising and delivering curriculum. These differences and the way in which the Board will address them are outline below.

i. School starting age.

While there is variation in the age of and requirement for commencement of schooling between states and territories, the national curriculum will take Kindergarten (Preparation, Reception, Transition) as the first year of schooling and design curriculum for students who are between 5 and 6 years old in this first year.

ii. The placement of Year 7 in primary or secondary schooling

There is significant variation in the placement of Year 7 within curriculum and school arrangements. While half of the states and territories have Year 7 as the first year of secondary schooling and the other half have it as the last year of primary schooling, there is considerable variation in the ways that schools are organised including separate primary and secondary schools, middle years structures and K–10/12 school structures. The national curriculum will be designed for Year 7 to be taught in a range of settings, with design time as indicated in 4.2.b.

iii. The use of stages or phases of schooling to organise the curriculum or as organisers of schooling

The national curriculum will be organised by years of schooling, with age-related developmental considerations being taken into account within this framework (see section 4.1). This approach to curriculum design does not preclude schools and school authorities aggregating curriculum content across years to facilitate a stage of schooling delivery strategy or to facilitate composite or multi-age class arrangements.

iv. Commencement of senior schooling

Some states and territories allow early commencement of senior school studies, based on curriculum documents designed for 'Year 11 and Year 12 students'.

National curriculum documents will be designed for Years K–10 and Senior Secondary Years. This does not preclude states and territories continuing to allow early commencement of senior secondary years curriculum.

4.3. Actions to be taken

- Year K national curriculum will be designed for students who are between 5 and 6 years old.
- The national curriculum will be designed for Year 7 as part of a K–10 sequence of learning for each of the learning areas. It will be written to be taught in either a primary or secondary school setting, with design time as indicated in 4.2.b.
- The senior secondary national curriculum will be designed for Years 11–12 students, acknowledging that state/territory policies allow Year 9 or 10 students to access senior secondary curriculum and have their achievements certified.

4.4 Inclusivity

4.4.a Key considerations

National curriculum will contribute to achieving the goals of the Melbourne Declaration, including the promotion of equity and excellence in education. The curriculum must value and build on students' prior learning, experiences and goals. Examples used in the curriculum should reflect the diversity of knowledge, experience and cultural values of students. Particular consideration should be given to representing groups that might otherwise be vulnerable to exclusionary pressures in visible and positive ways.

Some of the variation among students in their level of development and progress can become the basis for inequities in their educational experiences. In developing curriculum for all Australian students, the Board will not accommodate these differences by setting different expectations for different groups, since that reinforces differences and creates inequitable outcomes.

Teachers understand the diversity in the students they teach and are responsible for organising learning opportunities to meet individual learning needs. Teachers, schools and school authorities have a primary role in dealing with these differences. For example, for students with intellectual disabilities, individual education plans are developed to determine which adjustments should be made to the curriculum to best meet the needs of the individual student.

As per current arrangements, teachers will refer to school authority policies, resources and practices designed to assist particular student cohorts as they plan for and teach the national curriculum. These policies typically address support for:

- students from low socioeconomic backgrounds

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students learning English as a second language
- students of non-English speaking background
- students who live in isolated communities
- students with a physical or intellectual disability

In addition, issues of gender and levels of academic achievement also need to be taken into account to ensure an inclusive curriculum.

Particular attention will be given to how the needs of students with an intellectual disability are best addressed. Noting that education authorities will have requirements for individual education planning processes, consideration will be given to the merits of adjustments being made to the description of the national curriculum content and achievement standards to assist school authorities and teachers meet the needs of these students.

4.4.b Actions to be taken

- The curriculum content and the achievement standards, including student work samples, need to be developed to take account of the diversity of student backgrounds and ensure that, without lowering expectations, the curriculum takes account of and respects this diversity.
- Specific guidelines for writers will include questions, such as those that follow, to guide writers.

Language

- Does the curriculum acknowledge that all students bring a diverse range of language resources and that these need to be recognised, used and extended?
- Has care been taken to ensure that language used is not exclusive and that terms selected are not negative?
- Is the student's language acknowledged as an important learning resource? For example, are students encouraged to explore concepts using their home language when appropriate?

Stereotypes

- Are any groups ascribed characteristics that are more negative or positive than other groups? In what context?
- Are connections made to a variety of skills, knowledge and careers in non-stereotyped ways?

Bias

- Is there evidence of bias in the language being used, such as different language being used to describe the same idea or experience for various groups with pejorative connotations?
- Is a particular view or situation portrayed as 'natural' rather than one of many?

Context for learning

- Does the curriculum value and use what students bring to the class from their own background and life experiences?
- Does the content/context cater for different levels of ability?

- Does the content/context cater for different socio-economic situations and/or geographic locations?
- Are examples appropriate to different learning contexts, learners and learning styles?
- The curriculum writing process will involve advice and review of documents by advisory panel members with expertise on inclusivity to ensure the appropriateness of curriculum content and expectations of achievement.

4.5 General capabilities

4.5.a Key considerations

The *National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* sees important general capabilities that schools should help students develop, in addition to content of particular learning areas. These general capabilities include 'planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams ... the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines'.

The Board will deal explicitly with general capabilities within its curriculum. Curriculum documents will indicate how learning in a particular area will contribute to the goals in the national declaration, how connections can be made between the discipline areas and how particular general capabilities will be explicitly addressed in each area.

Some of these general capabilities become more discipline-specific as the school years progress, some less so. Each capability will be represented in each learning area in ways appropriate to that area. For some they will be included because they need to be developed and applied in the particular learning area. For others they can be taught and learned by students in any learning area – their development will depend on teachers' choices of classroom activities. The curriculum documents will be explicit on how the general capabilities are to be addressed in each learning area and how links can be made between learning areas.

The national curriculum will specifically cover the following general capabilities.

- **Literacy** knowledge, skills and understanding need to be used and developed in all learning areas. Initial and major continuing development will be in English but the national curriculum will ensure that literacy is used and developed in all learning areas.
- **Numeracy** knowledge, skills and understanding need to be used and developed in all learning areas. Initial and major continuing development of numeracy will be in mathematics but the national curriculum will ensure that this competency is used and developed in all learning areas.
- **Information and communication technologies (ICT)** skills and understanding are required for all learning areas. Some aspects of ICT competence are as much about information management as about the use of technology, so an important aspect of competence is the ability to evaluate the source, reliability, accuracy and validity of information that abounds in cyberspace. New digital technologies are used in creative and artistic pursuits, and in civic and political activities. These opportunities for private and public expression, unimagined half a generation ago, will make up important elements of the national curriculum.
- **Thinking skills** refers to a range of kinds of applied intellectual activities that are involved in using information to achieve outcomes. They include elements such as solving problems, making decisions, thinking critically, developing an argument and

using evidence in support of that argument. Thinking skills constitute the core of most intellectual activity.

- **Creativity** enables the development of new ideas and their application in specific contexts. It includes generating an idea which is new to the individual, seeing existing situations in a new way, identifying alternative explanations, seeing links, and finding new ways to apply ideas to generate a positive outcome. Creativity is closely linked to innovation and enterprise, and requires characteristics such as intellectual flexibility, open-mindedness, adaptability and a readiness to try new ways of doing things.
- **Self-management** enables a student to take responsibility for his or her own work and learning. It includes managing one's learning; monitoring, reflecting on and evaluating one's learning; identifying personal characteristics which contribute to or limit effectiveness; planning and undertaking work independently; taking responsibility for one's behaviour and performance; and learning from successes and failures.
- **Teamwork** enables a student to work effectively and productively with others. It includes working in harmony with others; contributing towards common purposes; defining and accepting individual and group roles and responsibilities; respecting individual and group differences; identifying the strengths of team members; and building social relationships.
- **Intercultural understanding** enables students to respect and appreciate their own and others' cultures, and work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds. It includes appreciation of the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; respect for Australia's multicultural composition; communicating and working in harmony with others within and across cultures, especially in relation to cultures and countries of the Asia-Pacific; and appreciation of difference and diversity.
- **Ethical behaviour** involves students understanding and acting in accordance with moral and ethical principles. Ethical behaviour includes the willingness, determination and capacity to think, make judgments and behave independently. It includes identifying right and wrong and having the willingness, determination and capacity to argue the case for change; understanding the place of ethics and values in human life; acting with moral and ethical integrity; acting with regard for others; and having a desire and capacity to work for the common good.
- **Social competence** will enable students to interact effectively with others by assessing and successfully operating within a range of changing, often ambiguous human situations. It includes initiating and managing personal relationships; being self-aware and able to interpret one's own and others' emotional states, needs and perspectives; the ability to manage or resolve conflicts and to foster inclusive and respectful interactions; and to participate successfully in a range of social and communal activities.

4.5.b Actions to be taken

- Writers will take account of the Board's position on general capabilities as outlined in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*.

- At the commencement of the writing process, the writers will determine which of the ten general capabilities are taken to be inherent to learning in the area and which ones could also be developed with an appropriate choice of activities by the teacher.
- Specific advice and direction on the inclusion of general capabilities will be provided at the writer induction.
- The general capabilities that are inherent to a learning area will be explicitly included in the 'content descriptions', with additional detail provided in the 'content elaborations' where appropriate.
- Using meta data links will be established between individual references to general capabilities, within and between learning areas, to allow teachers to reinforce teaching of each general capability.
- For other general capabilities that can be developed through teaching of the learning area, the curriculum document will provide general advice on how this can be achieved.

4.6 Cross-curriculum perspectives

4.6.a Key considerations

There are other cross-curriculum matters that can be thought of as perspectives rather than capabilities. The national curriculum, through development of curriculum documents for specific learning areas, will address three cross-curriculum perspectives.

1. Indigenous perspectives, in particular, will be written into the national curriculum to ensure that all young Australians have the opportunity to learn about, acknowledge and value the cultures of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.
2. A commitment to sustainable patterns of living will be reflected, where appropriate, in the curriculum documents.
3. The national curriculum should assist young people to develop skills, knowledge and understandings related to Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.

Each of these dimensions will be represented in learning areas in ways appropriate to that area. The curriculum documents will be explicit on how the perspectives are to be dealt with in each learning area and how links can be made between learning areas.

4.6.b Actions to be taken

- Each of these perspectives will be represented in learning areas in ways appropriate to that area. The curriculum documents will be explicit on how the perspectives are to be dealt with in each learning area and how links can be made between learning areas.
- Writers will take account of the Board's position on cross-curriculum perspectives as outlined in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*.
- Written advice and examples on the each of these perspectives will be provided to writers at induction.
- Using meta data links will be established between individual references to these perspectives, within and between learning areas, to allow teachers to reinforce teaching of each perspective.

5. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS: K-10

This section outlines the elements of the K-10 national curriculum and provides guidelines for its development.

5.1 Rationale

5.1.a Definition

The rationale describes the nature of the learning area in general terms and provides an outline of how learning in this area relates to the contemporary world and current practice. It explains the place and purpose of the learning area in the school curriculum and will explain how it contributes to meeting the goals in the national declaration.

The rationale will provide teachers with a clear sense of the place of the learning area within the whole school curriculum.

5.1.b Directions for development

A rationale:

- will be no more than 200 words
- will be written for K–12

5.2 Aims

5.2.a Definition

The aims of the learning area will identify the major learning that students will be able to demonstrate as a result of learning from the curriculum.

5.2.b Directions for development

Curriculum writers will write a statement of aims for K-10:

- that comprise a small number (up to 4) of statements for the learning area
- based on the draft aims in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: <learning area> documents. Agreement on the broad aims should be one of the first tasks for the writing team in consultation with the learning area advisory panel.

5.3 Organisation of the <learning area> curriculum

5.3.a Definition

This section will provide an overview of how the curriculum in the learning area will be organised K–12.

The curriculum across K–12 will be developed in a way that supports and coherently presents the continuity of learning, but which also provides for changing emphases across the K–12 range.

5.3.b Directions for development

Organisation of the curriculum will:

- be presented as a combination of text and diagrams

- highlight the coherence and continuity across K–12, while reinforcing particular emphases to account for nature of the learner across phases of schooling (see Section 4.1)
- indicate pathways of learning in the subject
- present an overview of how the curriculum content and achievement standards are organised and how they relate to each other.

5.4 Curriculum Content

5.4.a Definition

Across the years of schooling K-10, curriculum content will be presented in a sequence that guides teaching and learning designed to build depth of knowledge, skill and understanding. Curriculum content will be presented in the form of ‘content descriptions’ and ‘content elaborations’.

Curriculum content is primarily for use by schools and individual teachers although it also provides a reference for discussions with students, parents and the broader community.

5.4.b Content descriptions

Content descriptions are statements that describe the knowledge, concepts, skills and processes that teachers are expected to teach. They will include the general capabilities, as appropriate, for each learning area. These statements will be linked to present a scope and sequence across years of schooling.

This approach will assist the development of fundamental concepts and skills which need to be revisited across a number of years of schooling. The intention is for students to develop both deeper understanding of concepts and their application in a learning area, and relationships between ideas in a learning area.

Directions for development

Content descriptions will:

- be developed in accord with advice in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum papers
- be arranged by curriculum organisers (strands)
- be written for each year of schooling
- be designed so that they can be covered adequately in the notional time identified in this paper.
- facilitate rigorous, in-depth study, with an emphasis on depth rather than breadth
- be developed to ensure that learning is appropriately ordered and that unnecessary repetition is avoided
- provide the basis for the year level achievement standards
- follow the stem “students will be taught”
- be written in plain English.

5.4.c Content elaborations

The content elaborations may take the form of additional description or examples of contexts or of teaching points. They accompany the content descriptions to assist teachers to develop a common understanding about what is to be taught to students. They are not intended to be indicators of achievement nor a set of complete or even comprehensive content points that all students need to be taught. They will be provided as support material only, not part of the national curriculum to be implemented. .

Directions for development

Content elaborations should:

- provide further detail for teachers who may need this level of support
- illustrate and exemplify content
- be written in plain English

Content elaborations should **not**:

- constitute an approximation to the whole content description
- be examples of student tasks
- describe pedagogical approaches

Figure 1 provides an annotated example of the key characteristics and features of content descriptions and content elaborations. Note that the text within the boxes does not necessarily address national curriculum content alone.

Figure 1: Example of content descriptions and elaborations

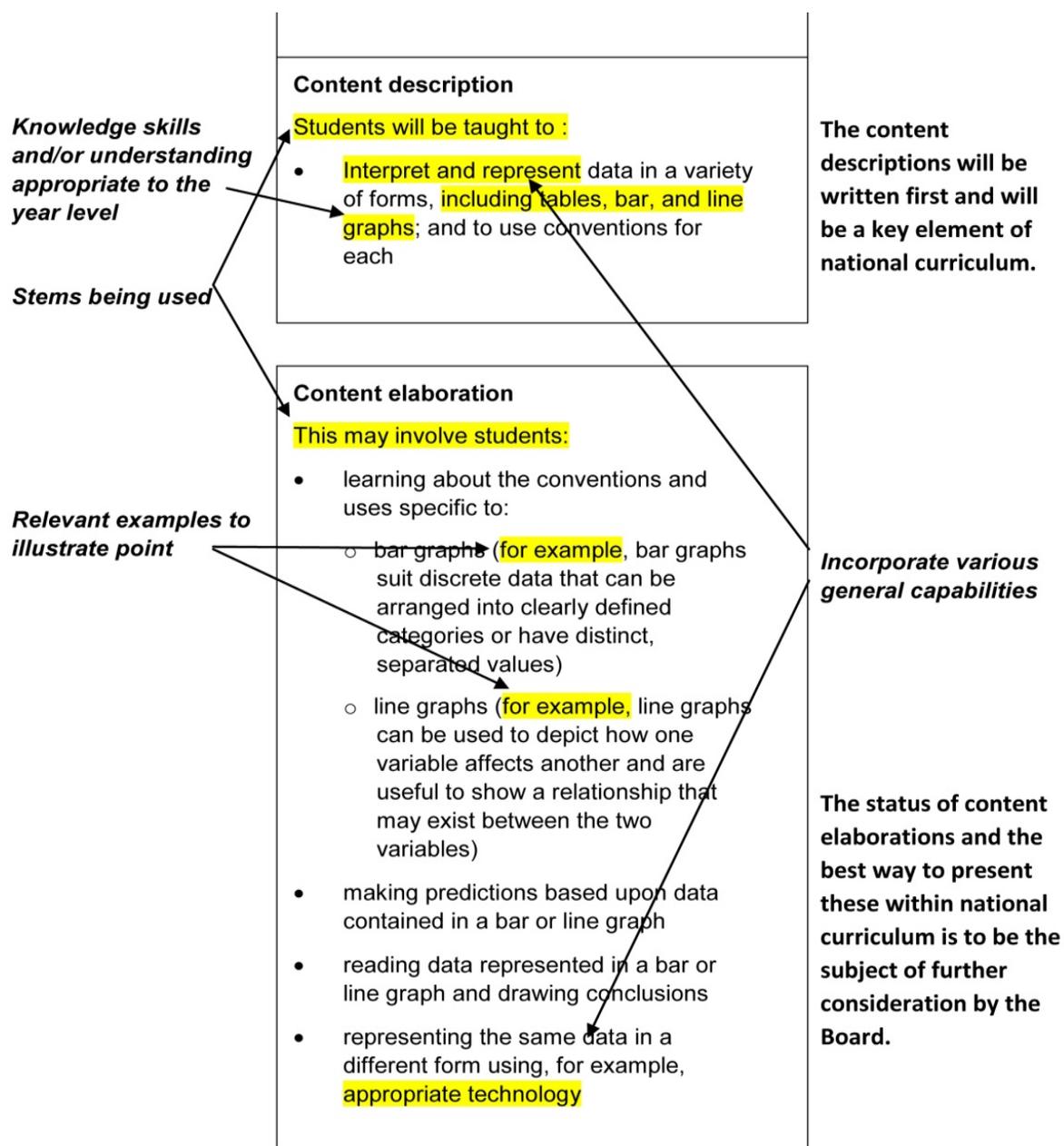
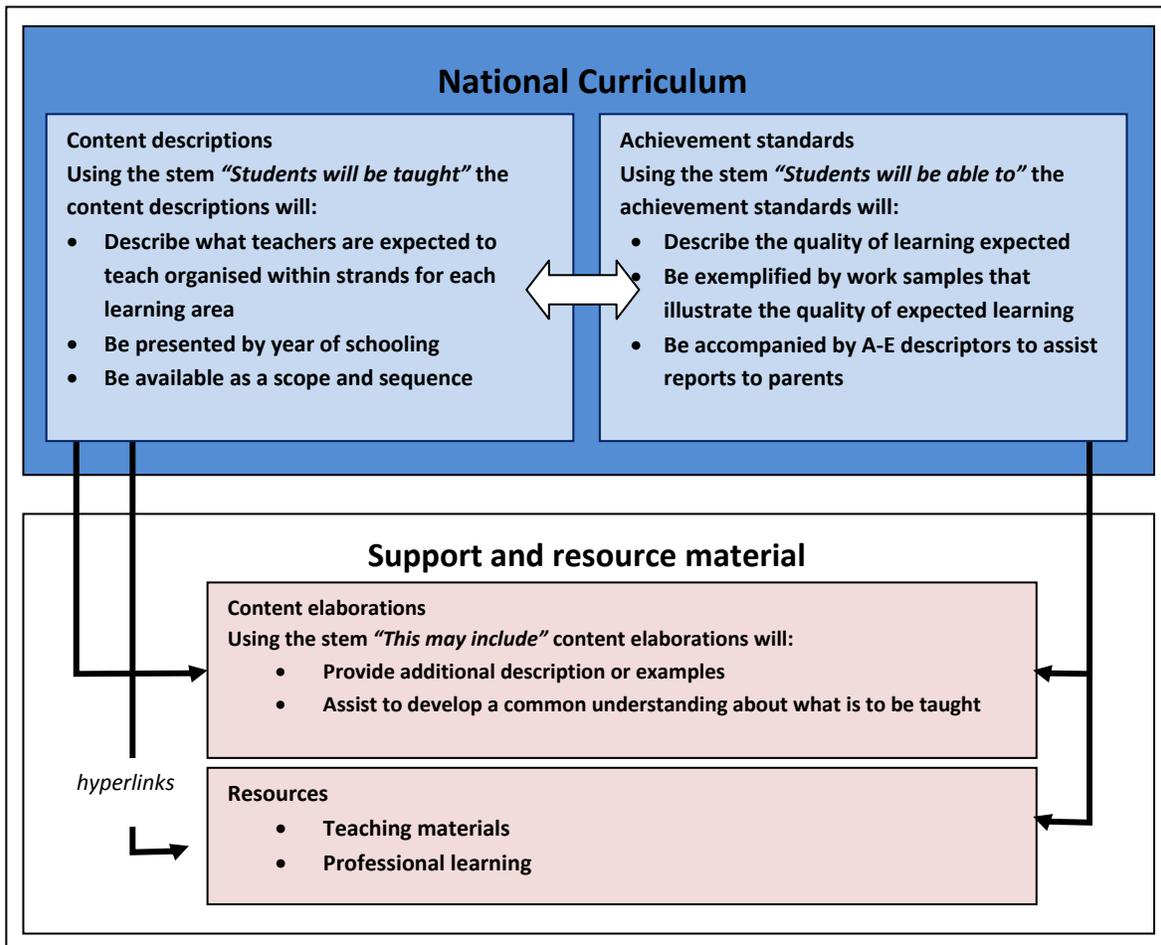


Figure 2 provides a diagrammatic representation of the elements of the National Curriculum and some of the relationships between the elements.

In the digital version of the curriculum, there will be access to content elaborations and hyperlinks to other learning areas, resources and support materials and further exemplification.

Figure 2: Elements of the national curriculum



5.5 Achievement Standards

5.5.a Definition/description

Achievement standards will provide an expectation of the quality of learning that students should typically demonstrate by a particular point in their schooling (that is, the depth of their understanding, the extent of their knowledge and the sophistication of their skills).

K–10 Achievement Standards

For each learning area at each year of schooling, the achievement standard will describe the quality of learning (depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill) expected of students

The quality of expected learning described will be the learning by which a student is well able to progress to the next level of learning.

The achievement standard will comprise:

- a description of the quality of expected learning; and
- a set of annotated work samples that illustrates the described quality of learning.

Together the achievement standards and work samples will assist teachers to determine and communicate “how well” students have achieved what was expected of them at a particular year level.

The achievement standard statements for each learning area will be presented in a sequence across K-10 and will describe and illustrate growth and development in the learning area.

Achievement standards will be published in conjunction with content descriptions. Digital publication of the national curriculum will enable connections to be made between the content descriptions and achievement standards.

A–E Reporting

At each year from Kindergarten to Year 10, teachers are required¹ to report students’ achievements to parents using an A–E framework.

To support the requirement of A–E reporting, brief descriptors will be developed for each of the 5 reporting framework levels. These descriptors will be generic across year levels and learning areas.

Each K–10 achievement standard will be aligned with the C level of this reporting framework.

¹ The *Schools Assistance Act Regulations 2009* (1) and *National Education Agreement* (2) require schools to report students’ achievement using an A to E framework (or equivalent).

(1) *Schools Assistance Act Regulations 2009*, ComLaw, <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/comlaw/Legislation/LegislativeInstrument1.nsf/0/A46ABAF203E1834ACA2575D8007CD2F6?OpenDocument>

(2) *National Education Agreement*, Council of Australian Governments, http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/IGA_ScheduleF_national_education_agreement.pdf

A D level on the reporting framework describes a quality of learning that is adequate for progression but may indicate the student will need additional support or assistance in progressing within the next level.

Work samples, which illustrate achievement well above and well below the achievement standard, will be provided to teachers to assist them to make on-balance judgements of A, B, D and E standards of achievement.

Development of achievement standards

The curriculum content and the achievement standard statements will be written by the same writing team, with development of achievement standards following (but not separate from) the initial drafting of curriculum content (see curriculum development process and timeline).

It is anticipated that more meaningful sequences of achievement levels will be developed if attention, in the development of curriculum content and achievement standards, is given to identifying and describing the development of fundamental skills and understandings. For example, in history, attention should be given to what changes in the development of underpinning skills, knowledge and understandings rather than the contexts for teaching history. This information will be derived from a combination of empirical evidence (that is, analysis of achievement data sets) and teacher experience.

While the development of achievement standards statements will be undertaken by curriculum writers, separately managed projects will be undertaken to:

- a) develop a set of generic grade descriptors for K–10
- b) provide advice on national or state/territory data sets that might be drawn upon to guide writing of national curriculum content and achievement standards. These data sets will provide empirical data on student learning/development across K–12 or a subset of these years
- c) collate existing student work samples which illustrate student achievement in relation to national curriculum content and/or the collection of new student work samples to meet any gaps identified by curriculum writers.

5.5.b Directions for development

Writers will:

- draft the achievement standard statements concurrently with the writing of curriculum content, although work on achievement standards will be preceded by a draft scope and sequence of curriculum content
- identify, as the focus of achievement standards, the particular content (fundamental concepts, skills and understanding) that will aid the description of growth and development across the years of schooling
- be guided by analysis of data sets that provides empirical information on the sequence of learning of fundamental concepts, skills and understanding in the learning area (what changes in learning) and the threshold points at which students demonstrate achievement of these concepts, skills and understandings (when do these changes typically occur)
- have access² to graded student work samples in key areas to guide and inform their

² This access will need to be negotiated with relevant curriculum authorities.

writing of achievement standards statements and to enable them to identify areas for which further work samples might need to be collected.

5.6 General capabilities

5.6.a Definition

This section of the document will provide brief description of the general capabilities that are specifically addressed in the learning area and those that could also be addressed through organisation of learning.

5.6.b Directions for development

The section on general capabilities will:

- provide a brief summation of the general capabilities that have been explicitly included in the content of the learning area, with some advice on any implications for teaching
- include a brief description of other general capabilities that could well be developed through teaching in the learning area, with advice on any implications for teaching
- be about 400 words in length.

5.7 Cross-curriculum perspectives

5.7.a Definition

The national curriculum, through development of curriculum documents for specific learning areas, will address three cross-curriculum perspectives.

- Indigenous perspectives, in particular, will be written into the national curriculum to ensure that all young Australians have the opportunity to learn about, acknowledge and value the history and cultures of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.
- A commitment to sustainable patterns of living will be reflected in the curriculum documents.
- The national curriculum should assist young people to develop skills, knowledge and understandings related to Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.

Each of these dimensions will be represented in learning areas in ways appropriate to that area. The curriculum documents will be explicit on how the perspectives are to be dealt with in each learning area and how links can be made between learning areas.

5.7.b Directions for development

The section on cross-curriculum perspectives will:

- provide a brief summation of where and how each of these three dimensions have been explicitly included in the content of the learning area, with some advice on any implications for teaching
- include a brief description of how a dimension, not explicitly included in the content of the area, would be addressed through teaching in the learning area, with advice on any implications for teaching
- be about 300–400 words in length.

5.8 Links to other learning areas

5.8.a Definition

Each learning area document will identify links to other learning areas to assist teachers to plan for learning and assist students to make connections between areas and deepen their understanding and knowledge of what they are being taught.

The links will focus on those substantive links which will enhance student learning.

5.8.b Directions for development

Links to other learning areas will:

- be identified through the curriculum development process by writing teams
- be highlighted in curriculum documents and linked digitally.

6. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS: SENIOR SECONDARY YEARS

This section outlines the elements of the senior secondary years national curriculum and provides guidelines for its development.

6.1 Rationale

6.1.a Definition

The rationale describes the nature of the learning area in general terms and provides an outline of how learning in this course relates to the contemporary world and current practice. It explains the place and purpose of the course in the school curriculum and will explain how it contributes to meeting the goals in the national declaration. The rationale will also describe the purpose for learning the course.

The rationale will provide teachers with a clear sense of the place of the course within the whole school curriculum.

6.1.b Directions for development

A rationale:

- will be written for the learning area, which will largely provide a K-12 perspective (this will be no more than 200 words)
- will include explanation to apply for the course i.e. across the four units within each senior secondary years course (this will be approximately 100 words).

6.2 Aims

6.2.a Definition

The aims of each course will identify the major learning that students will be able to demonstrate as a result of learning in the course.

6.2.b Directions for development

Curriculum writers will write a statement of aims:

- that comprise a small number (up to 4) of statements for the course
- that apply across the four units for each course
- based on the draft aims in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: paper for each learning area and the senior years position paper.

Agreement on the broad aims should be one of the first tasks for the writing team in consultation with the learning area advisory panel.

6.3 Organisation of learning in each course

6.3.a Definition

Senior secondary curriculum will be arranged by curriculum organisers and will be developed as

four sequential units. Units 1 and 2 will be developed to follow on from learning in Year 10. Units 3 and 4 will be developmentally more challenging and assume prior knowledge of learning contained in Units 1 and 2.

Each semester unit will be developed to be feasibly taught in about half a 'school year' (approximately 50–60 hours duration including assessment and examinations).

This section will provide an overview of how the curriculum in the learning area will be organised K–12 and, where appropriate, will illustrate the relationship between senior secondary courses. It will outline the structure of each unit within the course and will provide advice about specialisation and differentiation within the course.

This section will also provide an outline of the prior learning that has been assumed in the development of the course. It will also describe how the units relate to a qualifications framework, to assist with the comparison of course and unit complexity and expectation.

6.3.b Directions for development

Organisation of the curriculum will:

- be presented as a combination of text and diagrams
- highlight the coherence and continuity across K–12, while reinforcing particular emphases in the senior school course
- indicate pathways of learning in the course.

6.4 Curriculum Content

6.4.a Definition

Curriculum content identifies what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn. Curriculum content typically includes knowledge, skills and understanding that students are expected to learn and will be described for each of the four units in the senior secondary course (for example, Unit 2 of the Australian Senior Secondary Physics Course).

Curriculum content is primarily for school and individual teacher use although it also provides a reference for discussions with students, parents and the broader community.

6.4.b Content descriptions

Content descriptions are statements that describe the knowledge, concepts, skills and process that teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn.

Directions for development:

Content descriptions will:

- be written explicitly and clearly
- provide sufficient detail for state and territory authorities to set and for teachers and students to be confident that they can meet assessment and certification requirements

- generally, consist of a lead statement about conceptual focus with further detail exemplified by a series of sub-points where necessary to describe the breadth and depth of the knowledge, understanding and skills
- describe knowledge and understanding without the use of active verbs
- describe skills using active verbs
- include the general capabilities as appropriate
- use the stem, *'Students will be taught'*
- use examples within the description to elaborate content as necessary.

6.5 Assessment

6.5.a Definition

State and territory certification authorities will provide advice on the particular assessment and certification requirements to meet their particular policies and guidelines relating to assessment and certification procedures.

6.5.b Directions for development

- This section will include common text on the role of state and territory certification authorities in determining assessment requirements.
- Provision will be made for state and territory certification authorities to add specific assessment requirements.

6.6 Achievement Standards

6.6.a Definition/description

Achievement standards will provide an expectation of the quality of learning that students should typically demonstrate by a particular point in their schooling (that is, the depth of their understanding, the extent of their knowledge and the sophistication of their skills).

The achievement standards will provide a 5 point scale for describing how well a student has achieved what they were expected to learn in a course.

Achievement standards will be developed for each pair of units – that is, for Units 1 and 2 and for Units 3 and 4. They will be designed to support reporting to students and parents, and to contribute to greater consistency of assessment and reporting across states and territories. If achievement is to be reported for each unit the level of achievement can be interpolated from the achievement standards written for pairs of units.

Achievement standards will be represented by:

- a set of grade descriptors that describe, for each of the five points on the scale, what may be achieved by students for that year
- a set of work samples that will illustrate the learning in relation to the descriptors for each of the five points on the scale.

Together, the grade descriptors and work samples will assist teachers to determine and

communicate 'how well' students have achieved what they were expected to learn.

Collections of student work samples will provide illustrations of student achievement at each of the points on the scale. Each curriculum package will include task/s and student responses with annotations setting out the basis for the judgement about the level of achievement illustrated in the sample.

Achievement standards will be developed by ACARA in collaboration with state and territory certification authorities. Once developed the achievement standards will be published in conjunction with curriculum content with the intention that they will be reviewed and, where necessary, refined over the first few years of use.

It is anticipated that state and territory curriculum authorities may, for certification purposes, establish particular requirements and expectations with regard to determining and reporting semester results.

6.6.b Directions for development

Writers will:

- Identify, as the focus of achievement standards, the particular content (fundamental concepts, skills and understanding) that will aid the differentiation of quality of learning in the course
- be guided by analysis of data sets that provides empirical information on learning in the subject area at the senior secondary years
- draw on a qualifications framework to assist with the comparison of course complexity and expectation.
- have access to student work samples to guide and inform their writing of achievement standards statements and to enable them to identify areas for which further work samples might need to be collected.

6.7 General capabilities

6.7.a Definition

This section of the document will provide a brief description of the general capabilities that are specifically addressed in the course and those that could also be addressed through organisation of learning.

6.7.b Directions for development

The section on general capabilities will:

- provide a brief summation of the general capabilities that have been explicitly included in the content of the course, with some advice on any implications for teaching
- include a brief description of other general capabilities that could well be developed through teaching in the course, with advice on any implications for teaching
- be about 400 words in length.