

## Statement from Barry McGaw, Chair of ACARA 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010

### FINALISING PHASE ONE OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

The Board of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) met on Tuesday 26 October and reviewed progress in finalising the curriculum up to year 10 in English, mathematics, science and history.

Development began in 2008 with the preparation of broad 'shape' papers for each learning area or subject. These were revised and finalised after extensive national consultation and published in March 2009. They then provided the framework for detailed curriculum development.

Draft curricula were published electronically for consultation from March to May 2010. In that period, nearly 150 schools around Australia were involved in a trial of the drafts. At the end of the consultation period 3,650 individual online surveys and 209 written submissions from 186 peak organisations were received and over 1,200 people participated in national and state and territory forums.

Extensive consultation has continued as the draft curricula have been revised to take account of the advice received. This has included meetings of national panels for each curriculum and meetings with a wide range of stakeholders including professional associations concerned with each learning area.

ACARA also commissioned an independent mapping of the four Australian curricula against existing state and territory curricula and, in the case of English, mathematics and science where international assessments involving Australia currently exist, the relevant curricula from other high-performing countries. The results of these mapping exercises will be updated when the Australian Curriculum is finalised and published on the ACARA website. The international mapping is very encouraging. It shows that we will be expecting the same level of performance of our students as high-performing countries like Canada, Finland, Hong Kong and Singapore.

In the final stage of development, ACARA is undertaking detailed work with the curriculum authorities in the states and territories. While more work remains to be done in science than in the other three areas, we are working towards having the curriculum in all four areas finalised for ministers' consideration in December.

The current stage for each is:

#### *English*

The English curriculum is organised under three strands, *language*, *literature* and *literacy* but, of course, deals with the four modes, *listening*, *speaking*, *reading* and *writing*, under which existing curricula are often organised. Some states want teachers to be able to view the Australian Curriculum under these modes as well as the main strands. Since the curriculum is to be published electronically, the option of viewing by modes is now being

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developed and the presentation checked for coherence. The same content specifications and elaborations will be seen whichever view is taken.

Other issues that had been raised by the state and territory authorities have been resolved and work is underway to make the agreed adjustments.

### *Mathematics*

All of the issues raised have been resolved and work is underway to make the agreed adjustments. In the case of the use of calculators this has involved a formulation that will support the variation in practice that currently exists across the states and territories. The Australian Curriculum insists that students develop fluency in calculations without the aid of calculators and provides that calculators not be introduced before year 3 while also allowing for a delay in introduction to year 6 where that is the current practice.

### *Science*

The broad shape paper for science proposed that the curriculum be built around three strands, *science understanding*, *science as a human endeavour*, and *science inquiry skills*, but that it also be organised around a set of important 'big ideas' in science.

There was concern that the 'big ideas' had been lost from view in the detail of the curriculum. ACARA, state and territory science curriculum experts have identified nine key science concepts and a smaller number of unifying ideas. The Deans of Science are helpfully engaged in the discussions that are informing this work. Content that is not essential for the key concepts and unifying ideas is being removed to reduce the overall content in the curriculum.

### *History*

The draft history curriculum released in February 2010 was generally thought to have included too much content. The revisions undertaken since July have successively reduced it but there were concerns that the reductions had not yet gone far enough. The recent work between ACARA and the state and territory curriculum authorities has produced a final version that is appropriate in its extent and level of demand on students.

## **Completing the specification of general capabilities**

A 21st century curriculum must help students develop a set of important and powerful general capabilities as well as deep knowledge, understanding and skill in disciplines. These general capabilities are sometimes specified separately from the subject curricula. In the Australian Curriculum they are built in.

The general capabilities included are *literacy*, *numeracy*, *information and communication technology (ICT) competence*, *critical and creative thinking*, *ethical behaviour*, *personal and social competence* and *intercultural understanding*. Users will be able to see where each of these appears in each of the subject curricula and will also be able to view them separately.

In working out how to build these general capabilities into the curriculum, ACARA has established developmental continua to clarify how students can be expected to develop the capabilities and how differently the capabilities might be manifest over students' years of schooling. Specifying these capabilities in this way provides a clear view of what the capabilities consist of and also accommodates aspects of them, particularly the latter four, which do not fit well into the subject curricula. The developmental continua for the general capabilities will be finalised for publication early in 2011, though the ones for *literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) competence* will be published when the final curricula for English, mathematics, science and history are released.

### **Specifying some particular current priorities**

In developing the curriculum, ACARA has given particular attention to three areas that it has identified as 'current priorities' that it believes will not receive adequate attention without being highlighted. They are *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia and sustainability*. In the longer run, ACARA expects that they will become embedded in the curriculum and in teaching and learning in a way that will mean that they no longer need special priority attention.

The ACARA Board now expects to receive final versions of the K-10 curricula in English, mathematics, science and history for consideration at its meeting on 11 November 2010 and recommendation to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs for adoption at a meeting in early December.

The Board remains of the view that it is more important to achieve a high-quality outcome than to meet a particular deadline but it is presently confident that this schedule can be met.

### **Moving on to implementation**

Reaching agreement on the learning entitlements of students in K-10 English, mathematics, science and history is the first important step in a series that need to be taken before the curriculum can be fully implemented in schools.

Once the curriculum has been specified it will then be possible to identify gaps in the support available to teachers and students for them to use the curriculum effectively. It will also be possible to identify needs for professional development of teachers and for changes in initial teacher education programs. Support for implementation of the Australian Curriculum is the responsibility of jurisdictions and school authorities. States and territories have already commenced planning for implementation, with the assistance of ACARA, and this work will continue in 2011.

So 2011 will, in the main, be a year of preparation and familiarisation, with some jurisdictions commencing a phased approach to implementation. In some states or territories, preparation may include working in classrooms with the new curriculum to test it more fully. This will help with the validation of the achievement standards specified in the curriculum and with the collection of additional samples of students' work to illustrate different levels of achievement.

The question of when full implementation will be undertaken is a matter for the states and territories. Ministers have committed to substantial implementation by the end of 2013, subject to there being a three-year implementation period to commence from when the K-10 Australian Curriculum (content, achievement standards and support materials) becomes available.

### **Shape of the whole curriculum**

The development of an Australian Curriculum commenced with English, mathematics, science and history. As the K-10 curricula for these approach completion, work on the senior years of secondary education will continue.

The Ministerial Council has since asked ACARA to develop an Australian Curriculum that covers all the learning areas nominated in the ministers' Melbourne Declaration ([www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/melbourne\\_declaration,25979.html](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/melbourne_declaration,25979.html)). Work on geography, languages other than English, and the arts has commenced with the development of broad shape papers that will enable a debate about broad purpose and structure before work on detail commences, as the initial shape papers did for English, mathematics, science and history.

When ACARA started its work as the Interim National Curriculum Board, it produced a statement on the kind of curriculum it intended to develop. Following consultation on a draft, the shape paper was revised and published and then used to guide the development of the English, mathematics, science and history curricula. It is available on the ACARA website at [http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Shape\\_of\\_the\\_Australian\\_Curriculum.pdf](http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum.pdf).

With its responsibility now expanded to cover all the learning areas set down in the Melbourne Declaration, the ACARA Board is developing a new version of the shape paper to set out on a broader canvas what it intends the whole Australian Curriculum to look like. That paper is being finalised for presentation to the Ministerial Council for consideration and adoption.

Barry McGaw  
Chair  
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

## Resolution of Curriculum Issues : 29 October 2010

Following the public consultation process on the four draft curricula, which began in March and ceased in May, ACARA has worked to evaluate feedback from individuals and organisations, and adjust the curriculum to ensure that the final documents to be provided to the Australian community accurately reflect the vision in the Melbourne Declaration.

Since May, ACARA has engaged in an ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders to ensure that revisions made following the initial consultation are in line with the feedback received and that the emerging final curriculum addresses all areas required to position it as world class.

The tables below summarise the very final stages of the revision work which is being undertaken in the lead up to presentation of the first four learning areas to the Ministerial Council for approval in December. In these final stages, ACARA has been undertaking detailed work with the curriculum authorities in the states and territories.

### ENGLISH – FINAL REVIEW

English	
Matters for resolution	Status
<b>1. Ensuring the English curriculum is able to be viewed by the modes as well as by the strands</b>	The Australian Curriculum has been revised in response to these concerns and will provide the option of viewing the curriculum by the modes of speaking and listening, reading and writing, as well as by strands.
<b>2. The relationship between Literacy as a general capability and the strand to be explained more clearly</b>	The organisation section of the learning area has been revised to express more clearly the ways the literacy strand in English relates to the literacy general capability.
<b>3. Consistent referencing</b>	Consistent references to film, drama, reading and learning independently, enjoyment of English, and wide reading have been included in content descriptions and year level descriptions across the levels. Performance added to the year level description under the types of texts students create.
<b>4. Strengthening ICT, poetry, media analysis</b>	The following changes have been made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit reference to poetry by adding the words 'including poetry' as appropriate to content descriptions.</li> <li>• Elaborations to include more applications of ICT; for example, multiple authoring, instant publishing.</li> <li>• Descriptions of the sub-strands to explain that word processing is a platform for text construction.</li> <li>• A clearer explanation about ICT added to the organisation of the learning area.</li> <li>• The study of the mass media in English integrated into the curriculum through the sub-strand 'Texts in context'.</li> </ul>

## English

### Matters for resolution

### Status

<b>5. Strengthening the Literature strand particularly 'Creating Literature'</b>	An additional content description has been included to make more explicit the pre-writing stage (generating ideas) and experimentation with language and style. It includes ICT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• K–2 content descriptions focus more on context.</li><li>• Greater emphasis is placed on argument in literature and sophistication of the texts that students create.</li></ul>
<b>6. Using consistent terminology</b>	Changes have been made to terminology and definitions. For example, types of texts, text structures and language features.
<b>7. Reviewing sub-strands</b>	Sub-strand headings will be able to be turned off in the online environment.
<b>8. Strengthening reference to speaking</b>	The specific sub-strand that focuses on language for interacting, and which includes dialogue, has been strengthened.
<b>9. Inclusion of common grammatical terms</b>	Common grammatical terms have been added to the Language strand.

## MATHEMATICS – FINAL REVIEW

## Mathematics

### Matters for resolution

### Status

<b>1. Place value</b>	The concern about how the introduction of calculators from Kindergarten impacts on the understanding of place value has been addressed by introducing digital technologies into the Number and Algebra strand in year 3 after the establishment of the concept of place value.
<b>2. The development of fractions and decimals</b>	Concerns about the development of the sequence of fractions and unit fractions, especially the concept of dividing an object into thirds, have been addressed by making minor adjustments to the sequence or introduction of thirds.  The wording used to introduce the concept of unit fractions has been adjusted.  Decimals not being introduced until year 4, with calculators introduced earlier, could cause issues if a calculator display includes a decimal answer. Introduction of digital technologies in year 3 addresses the concern about the development of decimals
<b>3. Mandatory introduction of calculators</b>	The term “calculator” has been replaced by the expression “digital technologies” in Years 3, 4 and 5. The term digital technology is broad enough to include other forms of technology other than calculators which was agreeable to states and territories. The elaborations include statements about the use of calculators.
<b>4. Lack of consideration of sets and logic in the curriculum</b>	Sets have been made implicit in the use of the word “collections” in content descriptions and are explicitly included in content elaborations. Logic has now been included in the elaborations.

Mathematics	
Matters for resolution	Status
<b>5. Sequencing of content</b>	<p>Issues relating to the introduction and development of Pythagoras' Theorem have been resolved.</p> <p>Concerns about the placement of volume in relation to capacity throughout the development of the measurement sub-strand have also been resolved.</p> <p>The sequence of the content relating to Pythagoras' Theorem and to volume have been considered and adjustments to the sequence have been made.</p>
<b>6. Rationale for sub-strands</b>	Text at the beginning section of the document now explains the background to the development of the sub-strands.
<b>7. Mathematical terminology</b>	<p>Concerns about the definitions of some mathematical terms used in the curriculum have been resolved.</p> <p>Mathematical terms have been explained where appropriate in the elaborations and the glossary has been strengthened.</p>
<b>8. Verbs used with proficiencies</b>	<p>Verbs used to explain the proficiencies have been applied consistently in the content descriptions.</p> <p>The description of the proficiencies has been enhanced to include more specific terms.</p>
<b>9. Nature of elaborations</b>	Elaborations include some teaching suggestions as they can be the most effective way of clarifying the content descriptions.

## SCIENCE – FINAL REVIEW

Science	
Matters for resolution	Status
<b>1. Further reducing volume of content</b>	Content not essential to the key science ideas in the Science Understanding strand has been removed. The content of the Science as a Human Endeavour strand is being reduced, and collapsed into two sub-strands.
<b>2. Content sequences and specificity of content descriptions</b>	Nine key science concepts have been identified in the Science Understanding strand. Feedback from education jurisdictions is that using these has improved sequencing of concepts and specificity of the content descriptions, and will be useful for teachers in accessing the curriculum. Specific work is being undertaken to refine sequences in Years 8 – 10.
<b>3. Internal consistency of curriculum</b>	Nine key science concepts and a smaller set of unifying ideas have been identified. These have been used to inform revision to the Science Understanding strand and the organisation of the Learning Area section.
<b>4. Clarity of language throughout Science understandings</b>	Content descriptions are being revised to provide a greater degree of clarity and consistency of language.

Science	
Matters for resolution	Status
<b>5. Emphasis within Science as a Human Endeavour</b>	This strand is being re-organised into two sub-strands: Nature and development of science, and Use and influence of science. This clarifies the purpose and emphasis of this strand and its links with other strands.
<b>6. Volume and specificity of content descriptions for Science Inquiry Skills</b>	Revision has reduced the volume and improved the specificity of content.
<b>7. Reorder the strands in the views</b>	Feedback from jurisdictions indicates this is not a continuing major concern.
<b>8. Inconsistencies in language of content descriptions</b>	Refinement of content descriptions is continuing to enhance the level of consistency of language.

## HISTORY – FINAL REVIEW

History	
Matters for resolution	Status
<b>1. The need to bring together understanding and knowledge strands</b>	<p>The strands 'Historical Knowledge' and 'Historical Understanding' have been brought together into the one strand.</p> <p>It was agreed to add a statement to each year level description highlighting emphases in the concepts for developing historical understanding.</p>
<b>2. Reducing content 7-10 (overviews)</b>	The overviews were reviewed for manageability and the content reduced where appropriate focussing on what was agreed is most essential.
<b>3. Strengthening Australian history narrative 9-10</b>	<p>The Australian history narrative in Years 9-10 has been strengthened through the following revisions, with an Australian focus in the content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Year 9, depth study 2 is Australia in Asia (previously a comparative study – this now consists of two depth study electives – one focussed on Australia, the other on an Asian society).</li> <li>• In Year 9, depth study 3 is World War I (previously two depth study electives on WWI – have been recombined into one depth study).</li> <li>• In Year 10, depth study 1 is now World War II (the Vietnam War depth study elective has been removed and will be taught as part of the overview – an additional opportunity to cover the impact of the Vietnam War is provided in depth study 3).</li> <li>• In Year 10, depth study 2 is now 'rights and freedoms' which includes an emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (the separate depth study elective on women has been removed – aspects of women's history will be taught as part of the overview and have been integrated in other depth studies).</li> <li>• In Year 10, another depth study elective has been added to depth study 3 (this is focussed on migration to Australia which provides an opportunity for teachers to develop a stronger narrative focus).</li> </ul>

History Matters for resolution	Status
<b>4. Improving internal coherence 7-10</b>	The inquiry questions were revised to better represent the content for each year level 7-10.
<b>5. A perceived lack of world history 3-6</b>	<p>It was agreed that the opportunities for studying aspects of world history were sufficient in Years 3-6. It has been agreed that the present Australian content focus 3-6 is appropriate.</p> <p>Those requesting additional world history acknowledged that such revision would affect manageability and coherence, and indicated the status quo might be a reasonable option.</p>
<b>6. Flexibility in choice of depth studies</b>	There was agreement that there is sufficient flexibility for teachers. While some depth studies have been removed in Years 9-10, others have been added as part of the strengthening of the Australian history narrative.