

# **ACARA Consultation – Department of Education Tasmania**

## **Senior Secondary English, Mathematics, Science & History**

### **Summary**

Through consultations held in schools and colleges throughout the state, Department of Education, Senior Secondary College teachers and school leaders have expressed positive comments about the content, structure and intent of the Australian curriculum for years 11 and 12. As a system which is already implementing Phase 1 F to 10 Australian Curriculum, we aim to provide an alignment of curriculum provision F to 12 to ensure continuity and cohesion and the design principles of the Australian Curriculum support this aim. This is particularly important in building connections between our F-10 school settings and our Senior Secondary Colleges and in ensuring effective transitions for students and communication with parents, employers and members of the wider community.

Whilst there have been some issues raised by teachers around implementation concerns, we recognise that these issues are a state responsibility and we will work with the local qualifications authority (TQA) and colleagues in other sectors of education in our state to collaboratively build common understandings and directions around such issues, including any decisions around implementation timelines, course structures and possible future professional learning needs.

### **Issues and Concerns**

#### **Equity and inclusion:**

Many teachers in our system have expressed concern about the equity of the proposed courses and believe that students at the lower achievement levels are not catered for by the ACARA subjects, and argue that many of the ACARA subjects seem to be focussed on a tertiary pathway. Others have questioned why there is a “lower level” mathematics course (Essential Mathematics) and not an equivalent subject to cater for the lower level students in science and history.

The issue of the consistency of the curriculum still remains valid for the students who move from state to state or between systems. ABS data indicates that 20 percent of the Australian population moves each year and some Tasmanian teachers have expressed concerns that if the Australian Curriculum is to be a truly national curriculum that more consistency in implementation and course content must be guaranteed. At the same time, flexibility of course construction is valued by Tasmanian teachers e.g. the possibility in some cases of studying units 3 and 4 in year 11 and offering different combinations of units to best suit the learning pathways of students is also highly valued by Tasmanian teachers.

Below are specific issues relating to subject areas:

### **English**

1. The English courses are broad constructs without a level of detail to provide a basis of a course this may lead to significant variations in interpretation across jurisdictions
2. EAL/D has a full range of courses to provide the varying needs of this clientele

3. The achievement standards can be used as the basis of criteria and standards

## **Mathematics**

1. Our teachers view the curriculum materials as being very useful and look forward to development of the support materials in particular areas of professional development need
2. The achievement standards can be used as the basis of criteria and standards

## **Science**

1. Potential overlap exists between Science Year 9 and 10, Biology Years 11 and 12, Earth and Environmental Science Years 11 and 12 in various areas, including plate tectonics, evolution and natural selection. Can these areas be revisited to ensure content descriptors clearly identify what is taught at each year level and subject?
2. In the science subjects, the current achievement standard descriptions do not clearly explain what is required to meet each level. The A level seems to be very high – depending on how the verbs used are interpreted.
3. The achievement standards can be used as the basis of criteria and standards
4. Biology – Unit 2 – the content may be too much for the design time. Unit 4 lacks cohesion to some extent
5. Earth and Environmental Science Units 1 and 2 – questions have been raised about how well these topics will engage senior secondary students who have particular interest in the environmental science area

## **History**

1. Teachers have been positive about the aims, rationale and intent.

The Department of Education, Tasmania appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Australian Curriculum, draft materials for years 11 and 12 phase one subjects.