



Curriculum Development Process

Version 4.0

(approved by the ACARA Board 6 May 2010)

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Amendment history

| Date | Version | Comment |
|------------------|----------------|---|
| 19 February 2009 | 1.0 | Approved version following February ACARA Board meeting |
| 8 May 2009 | 2.0 | Updated to take account of ACARA Board decisions and planning for writing |
| 11 August 2009 | 3.0 | Updated to take account of ACARA Board decisions about development of key issues position paper and meetings of panels to discuss senior years curriculum |
| 6 May 2010 | 4.0 | Revised to take account of issues identified during phase 1 curriculum development, including greater clarity about the roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups involved in the process, and the establishment of a national panel |

Purpose

1. This paper describes the curriculum development process used by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to develop the Australian Curriculum. It includes an outline of the structures and the roles and responsibilities of key personnel involved.

Background

2. ACARA is committed to a process of curriculum development that:
 - is based on agreed curriculum design principles
 - involves high-level curriculum expertise nation-wide
 - provides opportunities for national consultation
 - establishes achievable timelines with available resources
 - ensures high-quality curriculum documents.
3. This paper includes a description of:
 - the underpinning elements of the Australian Curriculum's design
 - the roles and responsibilities of the individuals and groups involved in the curriculum development process
 - the major features of the four phases of the curriculum development process
 - the broad time frame and milestones for curriculum development.

Curriculum elements

4. The features of the Australian Curriculum are described in detail in ACARA's *Curriculum Design* paper. The curriculum development process will result in a curriculum that includes the following elements:
 - Content descriptions detail the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that students will be taught in the discipline as well as addressing the 10 general capabilities and the three cross-curriculum dimensions.
 - Content descriptions are supported with elaborations (i.e. examples of teaching points that illustrate the content descriptions).
 - Achievement standards describe the quality of expected student learning as a result of being taught the content.
 - Achievement standards are accompanied by annotated student work samples and advice on reporting frameworks.

Roles and responsibilities

ACARA Board and Curriculum Committee

5. The ACARA Board comprises 13 members as set out in the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008*.

The Board:

- authorises policy and procedures for the development of curriculum (e.g. curriculum development process, curriculum design)
 - endorses final documents for release or submission to the ministerial council (e.g. shape papers, curriculum documents)
 - makes decisions about issues having a significant impact on ACARA's operating environment, including strategic directions, political implications and key relationships.
6. The Curriculum Committee has delegated authority from the Board to:
 - make operational decisions about the curriculum development process (e.g. appointment of lead writers, advisory panels, information to be provided to teachers and the general community)
 - approve draft documents for consultation (e.g. initial advice papers for national forums, draft curriculum for consultation)
 - approve consultation strategies.

ACARA curriculum secretariat

7. The ACARA curriculum secretariat manages the learning area projects as they progress through each phase of curriculum development. The secretariat:
 - manages the writing teams and the learning area advisory panels during the writing process
 - ensures that a range of perspectives and views are canvassed and listened to
 - liaises closely with lead writers as they in turn lead, guide and support the writing process
 - builds and maintains successful and productive working relationships and communication between the writers and advisory panel members and also with key external stakeholders
 - communicates key advice from the Board and the Curriculum Committee to both the writing teams and the advisory panels and maintains transparent communication and decision-making processes
 - provides clear evidence-based advice to the Board and the Curriculum Committee about key developments, key issues that require resolution and recommended positions prior to approval
 - establishes and maintains consultative networks of key stakeholders

- manages a range of consultation strategies
- manages the drafting and revision of curriculum documents.

Lead writer

8. In the curriculum shaping phase for a learning area, one lead writer is appointed by the Board. Depending on the learning area, other discipline contributors may also be appointed by the Board to support the lead writer.
9. Lead writers and discipline contributors are selected because of their expertise in the area, the esteem in which they are held in the community, their networks and their deep knowledge of the learning, pedagogy and what works in professional practice.
10. The lead writer in the shaping and subsequent phases:
 - develops an initial advice paper and a draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: < Learning Area >* paper
 - acts in a consultancy role for ACARA
 - acts as coach or mentor during the writing phase
 - continues as a public advocate of ACARA during all phases of curriculum development
 - does not speak on behalf of ACARA beyond the focus of their work.

Curriculum writers

11. For the curriculum writing phase, a small team of writers is appointed (up to two or three for each stage of schooling), with coordination being undertaken by the curriculum manager and senior project officer.
12. Additional specialist writers may be appointed to assist in writing for a specific learning area of the senior secondary curriculum.
13. Writers are selected from an expressions of interest register and/or may be nominated by ACARA. Selection takes account of subject/learning area expertise, curriculum development expertise and teaching or related experience. Contracts are set for the period up to the publication of drafts for consultation.
14. The role of writers is to complete the writing task as directed by their contract and within the broad parameters and writing instructions established through the shape paper and the *Curriculum Design* paper.

Advisory panels

15. The lead writer and writing teams are assisted in the curriculum shaping and writing process by small panels of experts, known as advisory panels, which provide advice on draft materials at key stages in the development process.
16. The advisory panels are responsible for providing guidance and advice to ACARA on the Australian Curriculum materials as they are drafted. In particular, the advisory panels:

- provide advice to lead writers and/or writing teams at defined stages throughout the project
 - provide advice on the groups or individuals that are to be consulted
 - review documentation prepared during the curriculum development process
 - provide advice to the Board and/or its Curriculum Committee on the suitability and quality of curriculum documents (for consultation/for approval).
17. Advisory panels include learning area/subject advisory panels as well as cross-curriculum panels which focus on the needs of particular groups of students and/or stages of schooling.
 18. The chair of each advisory panel is a Board member or the relevant ACARA curriculum manager. The relevant senior project officer acts as the executive officer for the panel.
 19. Advisory panels meet at key stages in the writing process. The meetings include face-to-face meetings and tele/video conferences.
 20. Each panel comprises 8–12 members. Nominations are sought from curriculum and school authorities, universities and professional bodies. Panel membership is dynamic to reflect the phases of curriculum development but maintain a continuum of practice and knowledge within the panel. At particular phases there will be a demand for differing types of expertise and in different learning areas this may mean additional specialists. The emphasis is on expertise rather than representation.
 21. Each advisory panel member has particular expertise in the relevant area and the overall membership of an advisory group includes:
 - established, leading academics in the discipline and the field of education
 - teachers with a range of experience in the learning area from K–12
 - representatives from peak national bodies in the learning area
 - industry professionals (if applicable)
 - curriculum experts.
 22. Typically, members are appointed for up to a 12-month period.

Learning area/subject national panels

23. The learning area national panels are responsible for providing guidance and advice to ACARA on the Australian Curriculum materials as they are drafted. The panels are convened at key points in the shaping and writing process.
24. Members of the national panel have relevant curriculum expertise and curriculum development experience.

25. The panel for each K–10 learning area consists of about 50 members and is representational including:
 - five from each state and territory (three teachers – lower primary, upper primary, lower secondary; and two non-school-based – primary and secondary)
 - four representatives of professional teacher associations
 - six tertiary representatives (with discipline and education backgrounds).
26. The panel for each senior secondary course consists of about 40 members and is representational including:
 - four from each state and territory (including two teachers)
 - four representatives of professional teacher associations
 - six tertiary representatives (with discipline and education backgrounds).
27. In some cases, e.g. languages or the arts, there may be a variation to the membership profile to best meet the needs of the area under development.

Working groups

28. From time to time ACARA will establish task-specific working groups to provide advice or undertake particular curriculum-related tasks.

Conflict of interest

29. Before accepting a position as a writer or member of an advisory panel, nominees must declare formally, in writing, to the General Manager, Curriculum any potential conflicts of interest (financial, material or partiality interests) directly relating to the learning area.
30. The preference of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is to appoint people to advisory panels who do not have a conflict of interest. Each conflict of interest declaration will be considered by the General Manager, Curriculum with reference to the Chair of the Board.
31. The General Manager, Curriculum may advise individuals that:
 - they can continue to participate on a panel and perform their stated public duties provided they agree to a set of conditions which could include abstaining from discussing any matters that have a direct relationship to, or influence on, the area of conflict of interest; or
 - they will need to either remove themselves from the position or relinquish their duties.
32. All panel members are asked to confirm and declare any conflict of interest at each meeting given that individuals' circumstances may change.

The four phases of the curriculum development process

33. The curriculum development process involves four phases:
- curriculum shaping
 - curriculum writing
 - implementation
 - curriculum evaluation and review.
34. The major features of the ACARA curriculum development process are:
- planning
 - research
 - drafting
 - review during development
 - engagement
 - consultation
 - communication
 - reporting
 - redrafting
 - approval.
35. **Planning:** curriculum managers and senior project officers plan and manage the curriculum development process in each area, including establishing consultative networks, managing consultation, and managing the work of the writers appointed to draft and revise curriculum documents.
36. **Research** ensures that the curriculum being produced is world class and involves:
- conducting an environmental scan of existing state, territory and international curricula for the learning area
 - curriculum mapping
 - benchmarking against existing state and territory curricula
 - international benchmarking.
37. **Drafting:** writers draft curriculum materials.
38. **Review during development:** advice is sought at key points from advisory panels and the national panel.
39. **Engagement** ensures that the full support of stakeholders can be brought to bear in the successful design, development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

In the curriculum development context, 'engagement' is used as a collective term for the different types of formal relationships ACARA has with its stakeholders.

40. **Consultation:** the formal processes through which the views of stakeholders are sought in order to inform ACARA's curriculum development activities and decision making. The Board's consultation processes provide opportunities for anyone with an interest in a particular aspect of the curriculum to consider and respond to draft documents. In addition, state and territory curriculum and school authorities and other bodies engage in consultation activities.
41. **Communication:** the formal and informal processes through which information about ACARA's curriculum development is disseminated to stakeholders.
42. **Reporting:** the formal reporting processes ACARA follows to inform key stakeholders of major developments in the curriculum development process.
43. **Redrafting:** review and revision of draft materials in response to consultation feedback and endorsed actions.
44. **Approval:** the ACARA Board and its Curriculum Committee review and approve curriculum documents at key stages of development.

Curriculum shaping

45. The **curriculum shaping** phase produces a broad outline of the curriculum K–12 for the learning area. This outline is known as the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: < Learning Area>*. This paper provides broad direction on the purpose, structure and organisation of the learning area. Along with the curriculum design paper, it is intended to guide writers. It also provides a reference for judging the quality of the final curriculum documents for the learning area.

Major features of the curriculum shaping phase

| Features | Major deliverable(s) |
|-----------------|--|
| Planning | Establish project timelines |
| Research | Environmental scan of state, territory and international curricula |

| Features | Major deliverable(s) |
|---------------|---|
| Drafting | <p><i>Position paper</i> – resolution of key issues before beginning to write the shape paper</p> <p><i>Initial advice paper</i> – addressing the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the rationale or purpose for the learning area? • What are the broad objectives of learning in the area? • What are the ‘big ideas’ that need to be understood, both by the teacher in delivering the curriculum and by learners? • What is the nature of knowledge, understanding and skill in the area? • How might learning in this area aid development of the general capabilities? • How might the cross curriculum priorities be incorporated in this learning area? • How will the content best be organised, i.e. what will the key strands or other content organisers/structures be? • How might the knowledge, understanding and skill in this area best be described across years, e.g. by year or bands of years? • How would a ‘futures-orientation’ or ‘contemporary orientation’ be incorporated in this area? • What is the broad scope and sequence of learning that would be appropriate over years K–12? <p><i>Draft shape paper</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next iteration of the initial advice paper in response to consultation feedback <p><i>Final Shape of the Australian Curriculum: <Learning Area> paper</i></p> |
| Review | <p>Advisory panel(s)</p> <p>National panel</p> <p>International and national reviewers</p> |
| Engagement | <p>Including consultation and communication strategies</p> |
| Consultation | <p>National forum on initial advice paper</p> <p>Online consultation on draft shape paper</p> <p>Other consultation on draft shape paper – industry, parents, students</p> <p>Further liaison with key stakeholder groups to discuss particular issues raised during consultation and how they might best be addressed</p> |
| Communication | <p>Strategies to inform stakeholders of intentions and key developments of this phase of the curriculum development process</p> |

| Features | Major deliverable(s) |
|------------|--|
| Reporting | <p>National forum feedback report to Curriculum Committee, Board, stakeholders</p> <p>Briefing report to federal, state and territory ministers and curriculum and school authorities including the broad direction for the new curriculum and implementation issues</p> |
| Redrafting | <p>Review and revision of draft shape paper in response to consultation feedback</p> |
| Approval | <p>Curriculum Committee endorsement of the draft shape paper and consultation report</p> <p>Board approval of the shape paper and consultation report</p> <p>Publication on the ACARA website of the consultation report and endorsed shape paper (including technical specifications) that will guide the subsequent phase of curriculum development, along with timelines for the next phase</p> |

Curriculum writing

46. The **curriculum writing** phase produces a curriculum ready for use by school authorities and teachers in all states and territories.

Major features of curriculum writing phase

| Feature | Major deliverable(s) |
|--------------|--|
| Planning | Project plan reviewed and amended as appropriate Consultation strategy for writing phase |
| Research | Curriculum mapping of the Australian Curriculum to existing formal and enacted curricula in Australian states and territories International benchmarking |
| Drafting | Outline drafted of scope and sequence of what is to be taught Content descriptions drafted Achievement standards drafted Review consultation data to identify key issues Identify possible responses to issues, including possible alternative positions Redraft curriculum to address issues, following agreed actions Refinement of curriculum in response to final review Collection and annotation of work samples to illustrate achievement standards (following approval of curriculum) |
| Review | Advisory panels – identification of particular issues and how they might be addressed; review of redrafted curriculum National panel – identification of particular issues and how they might be addressed; review of redrafted curriculum International and national reviewers/critical friends to review at K–10 and senior secondary writing phase |
| Engagement | Stakeholder database Consultation and communication strategy developed |
| Consultation | Online consultation portal Online surveys State/territory and national consultation forums Trialling in schools |

| Feature | Major deliverable(s) |
|---------------|---|
| Communication | Media strategy Communication strategy to support publication of online curriculum |
| Reporting | Consultation report and proposed responses to Curriculum Committee and Board for advice and approval Consultation report for key stakeholders Briefing report for the ministerial council identifying implementation issues |
| Redrafting | Meeting of writers and small advisory group to discuss issues and proposed actions for redrafting Redraft curriculum to address issues, following agreed actions National panel to review and validate revisions |
| Approval | Curriculum Committee approval of the draft curriculum for consultation Board approval of revised curriculum Submission of final curriculum to the ministerial council |

Implementation

47. The **implementation** phase will involve delivery of the curriculum to school authorities and to schools in time for school authorities, schools and teachers to prepare for implementation. Implementation and implementation support is the responsibility of school authorities. The ACARA Board will monitor the use of the Australian Curriculum to determine whether the intentions of the curriculum are being achieved.

This phase will typically involve:

- briefing sessions on the curriculum, by ACARA, to reinforce key directions and intentions and to support school authorities to prepare for implementation
- school authorities determining their implementation schedules, taking account of external requirements and local curriculum renewal cycles
- school authorities and other bodies providing curriculum support materials and teacher professional learning opportunities for teachers to assist with implementation
- augmentation of the initial set of work samples published, to illustrate achievement standards
- collection, collation and analysis of data on the use of the Australian Curriculum
- routine reports on implementation issues to the Board
- identification and recording of issues that need to be taken into account in subsequent curriculum revision.

Curriculum evaluation and review

48. The **curriculum evaluation and review** phase will involve periodic review of the data on curriculum implementation and issues raised to determine whether a curriculum (or part of it) warrants revision.

This phase will typically involve:

- provision of feedback, via online mechanisms, by teachers using the curriculum
- periodic consultation with teachers and key groups about the existing curriculum to identify issues that warrant further investigation
- regular review of national and international literature and best practice
- regular reports to the ACARA Board's Curriculum Committee on relevant options for addressing issues.

Broad time frame and milestones

49. The following table provides an outline and indicative time frame for the first two phases of the Board's curriculum development process.

| Phase | Activity | # weeks (cumulative) |
|---------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Curriculum shaping | Identify issues to be resolved before commencement of shape paper | 2 weeks (2) |
| | Establish advisory panel to provide advice on key issues Advisory panel meets to guide development of position paper | 4 weeks (6) |
| | Position on key issues approved by the Board | 4 weeks (10) |
| | Select lead writer | 4 weeks (14) |
| | Initial draft of shape paper (Initial advice paper) prepared, including initial meeting with advisory panel | 4 weeks (18) |
| | Initial advice paper approved for consultation | 2 weeks (20) |
| | National forum – consultation on initial advice paper | 2 weeks (22) |
| | Write draft shape paper | 6 weeks (28) |
| | Draft shape paper approved for consultation | 2 weeks (30) |
| | Consultation on draft shape paper | 10 weeks (40) |
| | Consultation report and directions for redrafting shape paper prepared and considered by Curriculum Committee | 2 weeks (42) |
| | Shape paper amended and submitted for approval by the Board | 3 weeks (45) |
| | Amended shape paper and consultation report approved by the Board | 2 week (47) |
| | Briefing submitted to ministers and school and curriculum authorities Approved shape paper and consultation report published online | 2 weeks (49) |
| Curriculum writing | Select writing team and advisory panel | 4 weeks (4) |
| | Writers and advisory panels undergo induction and collaborate to produce a K–12 overview or broad scope and sequence | 1 week (5) |
| | Develop broad outline of curriculum | 10 weeks (15) |

| Phase | Activity | # weeks (cumulative) |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------|
| | Seek advice on broad outline of curriculum from national panel. Report on progress to writers, advisory panel and Board | 4 weeks (19) |
| | Endorsement of broad outline by Curriculum Committee | 2 weeks (21) |
| | Develop detailed draft of curriculum content descriptions and content elaborations followed by achievement standards This will involve two blocks of face to face writing time and meetings with advisory panels | 10 weeks (31) |
| | Detailed draft approved for consultation by Curriculum Committee | 2 weeks (33) |
| | Consultation on draft curriculum, including forums and online portal and survey | 12 weeks (45) |
| | Consultation report prepared for writers and for Board | 4 weeks (49) |
| | Revisions to curriculum in response to consultation report Revisions checked out with national panel | 6 weeks (55) |
| | Endorsement of curriculum (by Curriculum Committee, Board and MCEECDYA) | 2 weeks (57) |