

## TERMS OF REFERENCE - REVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM F-10

### Background

The 2015 Australian Government Review of ACARA recommended that “ACARA undertake a six-year cycle of review of the Australian Curriculum”, and this was endorsed by Education Council at its meeting of 18 September 2015.

On 12 June 2020, Education Council tasked ACARA to undertake a review of the Australian Curriculum for Foundation to Year 10 (F-10) to ensure it is still meeting the needs of students and providing clear guidance for teachers. ACARA will work in close consultation with the profession and key stakeholder groups to complete the review by 2022.

The first F-10 Australian Curriculum was published in December 2012 for English, mathematics, science and history, followed by geography in May 2013.

By October 2015, the curriculum for these areas had been revised as a result of the 2014 Australian Curriculum Review and republished, along with Australian Curriculum for: F-6 HASS; F-10 The Arts, Health and Physical Education and Technologies; Years 3-10 Civics and Citizenship; Years 5-10 Economics and Business; Years 9-10 Work Studies (elective); and F-10 Languages in Arabic, Chinese, French, Indonesian, Italian, German, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish, Vietnamese.

By December 2016, the F-10 Australian Curriculum was complete with the publication of the remaining languages subjects and frameworks.

Curriculum and school authorities in each jurisdiction have determined the pace and nature of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

### Aim

The review will aim to improve the Australian Curriculum F-10 by refining, realigning and decluttering the content of the curriculum within its existing structure and underpinned by the education goals of the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019)*.

Specifically, the review will:

- a. refine and reduce the amount of content across all eight learning areas of the Australian Curriculum F-10, with a priority on the primary years, to focus on essential content or core concepts
- b. improve the quality of content descriptions and achievement standards by removing ambiguity and unnecessary duplication, and ensuring consistency and clarity of language and cognitive demand

- c. rationalise and improve content elaborations, ensuring they are fit for purpose and they suggest to teachers the most authentic ways to treat general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities when teaching the learning area content
- d. improve the digital presentation of the Australian Curriculum in line with agreed content changes and user experience requirements.

## Principles

The following principles will guide the scope and approach to the review:

1. The review will be undertaken within the existing three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum; that is, the eight discipline-based learning areas, seven general capabilities and three cross-curriculum priorities as described in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (v5.0, 2020) paper.
2. The review will be undertaken within the existing structural elements of the Australian Curriculum; that is, content descriptions, achievement standards and content elaborations as described in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (v5.0, 2020) paper.
3. The review will be undertaken concurrently in all eight learning areas and from Foundation to Year 10, noting that:
  - a. content changes will not necessarily be of the same scale or magnitude across the learning areas and all years of schooling from Foundation to Year 10
  - b. the learning areas of Mathematics and Technologies will be prioritised in the review timeline
  - c. the review will give particular attention to the Foundation to Year 6 curriculum in order to reduce overcrowding and provide improved manageability and coherence to the Australian Curriculum in the primary years of schooling
  - d. the review of all 16 Languages subjects will be undertaken in stages with Chinese, French, Italian and Japanese completed first and along with the other learning areas
  - e. the elective Years 9-10 Australian Curriculum: Work Studies will not be included in the review.
4. The review will involve extensive consultation with the profession and engagement with key stakeholders; content changes will be made by subject matter experts and those with expertise in early years, primary and secondary education (including teachers, school leaders, curriculum officers and academics).
5. The review will draw on current research, evidence, curriculum developments and learnings from implementation to identify where curriculum content can be refined, realigned and decluttered.
6. The review will maintain the Australian Curriculum as an inclusive curriculum, defined by its capacity to recognise and respond to the diversity of learners.
7. The Australian Curriculum will continue to be published as a digital curriculum with improvements to online functionality and presentation based on user research.

## Key directions

Key directions will guide the review process to identify where and how the content of the curriculum can be refined, realigned and decluttered.

## Learning areas or subjects

*Content descriptions* specify the knowledge, understandings and skills that young people are expected to learn, and teachers are expected to teach, across the years of schooling in each learning area or subject.

The review will look to:

- a. prioritise what is essential for students to learn in each learning area or subject by identifying core concepts – defined as the “key knowledge, understandings and skills that are central to a learning area or subject, are developed in increasing depth across the years of school, and ... provide opportunities for students to transfer and apply their increasingly deep understandings to a variety of meaningful contexts.”<sup>1</sup>
- b. improve the quality of content descriptions within each learning area or subject to:
  - remove ambiguity and ensure the meaning is clear to teachers
  - remove unnecessary duplication and repetition within the learning area and across learning areas
  - ensure consistency and clarity of language across each year level and across all learning areas
  - align the cognitive and performance demand of content descriptions within and across learning areas and year levels
  - reflect new evidence and research developments in the learning area.
- c. reduce the amount of curriculum content across the F-10 Australian Curriculum, giving priority to decluttering the curriculum from Foundation to Year 6 to improve manageability and alignment of content descriptions across the learning areas in the primary years, and to focus on the development of foundational literacy and numeracy skills and personal and social capability in the early years

*Achievement standards* describe what students are typically able to know, understand and do as they progress through the years of schooling.

The review will look to:

- a. improve the quality of achievement standards to ensure the description of what students know, understand and can do is central to the achievement standard and aligns with the essential content students are expected to learn as described in the content descriptions;

---

<sup>1</sup> NSW Curriculum Reform Interim Report, October 2019 (pp 78-79)

- b. strengthen the cognitive alignment between achievement standards and content descriptions across learning areas, drawing on existing evidence from assessment and validated work sample programs across the jurisdictions, as well as new evidence or research into student learning pathways; and
- c. improve the consistency and clarity of language used in the achievement standards across all learning areas.

*Content elaborations* are optional elements of the curriculum; they provide teachers with suggestions on ways they can tailor learning area content to meet their local circumstances and include the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities when teaching the learning area content.

The review will look to:

- a. reduce the number of content elaborations by removing unnecessary repetition and duplication with the content descriptions
- b. improve the quality of content elaborations ensuring they are fit-for-purpose; that is, they make the content descriptions and achievement standards accessible and meaningful to teachers and provide illustrations and suggestions of how to program and teach the content
- c. improve the quality of content elaborations by only embedding the general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities explicitly in content elaborations where it is most authentic to do so.

## General capabilities

The seven general capabilities (literacy, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ICT capability, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding) are addressed through the content of the learning areas in the Australian Curriculum.

The review will look to:

- a. revisit and improve where necessary, the learning continua for the general capabilities with reference to current research, in particular:
  - o work on critical and creative thinking in alpha phase for the Online Formative Assessment Initiative may inform revisions to the critical and creative thinking continuum; and
  - o replace the learning continua for literacy and numeracy with Version 3 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions and use the progressions to inform refinements to the Australian Curriculum in English and Mathematics, as well as review the literacy and numeracy demands of content in the other learning areas
- b. declutter the content of the Australian Curriculum by improving the relationship of the general capabilities to learning area content, removing any repetition of content between the general capabilities and the learning areas and replacing the current 'icon tagging' for general capabilities on the Australian Curriculum website with a more user-orientated approach.

## Cross-curriculum priorities

The three cross-curriculum priorities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability) are addressed through the content of the learning areas in the Australian Curriculum.

The review will look to:

- a. revisit and improve if necessary, the organising frameworks for the cross-curriculum priorities with reference to current research
- b. declutter the content of the Australian Curriculum by improving the relationship of the cross curriculum priorities to learning area content, removing any repetition of content between the cross curriculum priorities and the learning areas and replacing the current 'icon tagging' for cross curriculum priorities on the Australian Curriculum website with a more user-orientated approach.

## Considerations

The review will have regard to:

- a. the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (December 2019)
- b. ACARA's *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* paper (V5.0, 2020) and ACARA's *Curriculum Review Paper* (V1.0, 2020)
- c. ACARA's program of research, including findings from curriculum comparative studies (<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources-and-publications/publications/program-of-research-2017-2020/>) and annual monitoring reports from Australian jurisdictions implementing the Australian Curriculum (<https://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/monitoring-reports>)
- d. findings and outputs from the discovery and alpha phases of the Online Formative Assessment Initiative
- e. alignment of the Australian Curriculum with the *Early Years Learning Framework*
- f. other relevant national policy developments, initiatives and reviews, including Education Council's current *Review of Senior Secondary Pathways*
- g. any emerging insights from Australian jurisdictions in their implementation of the Australian Curriculum, including recent and current curriculum reviews and relevant student assessment programs and frameworks
- h. perspectives from international jurisdictions where there have been recent curriculum reviews and revisions, and insights from relevant international assessment programs and frameworks.

## Approach

ACARA curriculum officers will lead the review process in each learning area, engaging a small team of subject matter experts and practitioners to assist in the content refinement.

ACARA's F-12 Curriculum Reference Group will be the key advisory group with oversight of key issues emerging from across the learning area review processes. ACARA's other

existing advisory structures will also provide the mechanism for wider stakeholder engagement and consultation.

Meaningful consultation with jurisdictions and teachers will be key to the review process. To support this, ACARA will establish two new reference groups for each of the eight learning areas as the formal mechanism for consultation and feedback throughout the review process:

- a. A teacher reference group, made up of practising primary and secondary teachers nominated by state/ territory education authorities and the non-government sectors, to provide practitioner feedback on content changes
- b. A curriculum reference group, made up of learning area curriculum officers/specialists from state/ territory education authorities and the non-government sectors, to provide jurisdictional advice and feedback throughout the review process.

In addition, two new primary (F-6) reference groups will be established:

- a. A primary (F-6) teacher reference group, made up of practising teachers with early years, primary and multi-age class experience nominated by state/ territory education authorities and the non-government sectors, to review F-6 curriculum content for manageability, consistency and clarity across the learning areas
- b. A primary (F-6) curriculum reference group, made up of primary curriculum officers/specialists from state/ territory education authorities and the non-government sectors, to provide jurisdictional advice and feedback throughout the review process.

Subject matter teacher professional associations, teacher unions, academics, principal and parent groups and other key stakeholder groups will be extensively engaged and consulted throughout the review process in a range of ways appropriate to each learning area.

## Timeline

The review will commence in 2020 following Education Council's agreement to the terms of reference, and the review of all learning areas will be completed by the end of 2021 (with all Languages subjects completed by the end of 2023).

Once endorsed by Education Council, the revised F-10 Australian Curriculum will be published on an improved website platform and be available for implementation from the start of 2022.