

Terms of Reference:

Iterative Review of the F-2 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics

Approved by Education Ministers on 20 February 2026

Background

The Australian Curriculum is designed to help all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. Presented as a developmental sequence of learning from Foundation - Year 10, the Australian Curriculum describes to teachers, parents, students and others in the wider community what is to be taught, and the quality of learning expected of young people as they progress through school.

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. Endorsement of the Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0, followed a review undertaken in 2020/2021. The review involved extensive consultation and a rigorous program of research.

At the 17 October 2025 Education Ministers Meeting (EMM), Ministers publicly announced, via the EMM Communique, the 10-year Australian Curriculum Review Cycle, and approved the Australian Curriculum: Criteria for an Iterative Review. At this meeting, ACARA was also tasked with scoping an iterative review of Australian Curriculum: F-2 Mathematics given:

- NAPLAN results and the national focus on numeracy improvement, ahead of the Year 1 Numeracy Checks coming into effect this year.
- Workload concerns and teacher shortages have raised expectations about the level of clarity and specificity that curriculum documents should provide to support implementation in schools and classrooms.

Ministers tasked ACARA with:

Stage 1: Scoping exercise

ACARA works with jurisdictions, sectors, and stakeholders to identify the causes of implementation challenges in F-2 maths and assess existing support available to teachers. This stage would determine whether further work should focus on the development of content sequencing supports or the revision of curriculum content and achievement standards. ACARA would then prepare a proposal for EMM with scope, timelines, and costings by February 2026.

Stage 2: Iterative review- March-September 2026

ACARA would undertake the iterative review to deliver on the agreed approach to address current challenges in teaching the F-2 Mathematics curriculum, i.e. consultations and the development of either content sequencing documents to support teachers to implement the curriculum or revised curriculum content and achievement standards.

Aim

The proposed iterative review aims to improve student outcomes through supporting teachers to deliver the mathematics curriculum as intended with greater confidence and consistency, and reduce workload for teachers by providing greater clarity, prioritisation and sequencing.

Principles

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

- a. The iterative review will be underpinned by the education goals of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019).
- b. The iterative review will be undertaken only for the Foundation to Year 2 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics.
- c. The iterative review will involve consultation with the profession and engagement with key stakeholders; any proposed changes to content descriptions or achievement standards will be made in collaboration with subject matter experts and those with expertise in early years and primary mathematics education.
- d. Through collaboration and consultation with state and territory systems and sectors, the iterative review will be informed by existing work and resources, or those under development.
- e. The iterative review will draw on current research, evidence, curriculum developments and learnings from implementation to identify where the F-2 curriculum can be refined, prioritised and sequenced within year levels to improve the interpretation and assist teachers to implement the curriculum as intended.
- f. The iterative review will maintain the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics as an inclusive curriculum, defined by its capacity to recognise and respond to the diversity of learners.

The iterative review will also consider:

- a. ACARA's Shape of the Australian Curriculum paper (Version 5.0) and ACARA's Curriculum Design paper (Version 3.1).
- b. Relevant national policy developments and initiatives.
- c. Any emerging insights from Australian jurisdictions in their implementation of the Australian Curriculum, as well as perspectives benchmarking and country comparisons.

Stage 1 findings

While there was little appetite for a full-scale review of F-2 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics, opportunities to improve the F-2 Mathematics were identified through consultation, Advisory Group discussions, benchmarking and country comparison activities and literature review.

The four key areas for curriculum improvement were:

- a. Clear advice on the prioritisation of content;
- b. Greater mathematical detail to improve clarity for teachers about what students will learn at and within each year level;
- c. Providing specific content sequencing, highlighting related concepts and the sequence of introducing concepts;
- d. Inclusion of explicit content on foundational consumer and financial literacy.

Deliverables

- a. Review of the F-2 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics, with a specific and limited focus on foundational consumer and financial literacy and clarity and sequencing of content descriptions and achievement standards. This will include targeted refinement of selected content descriptions and associated content elaborations where clarification or strengthening is required to support teacher interpretation and implementation.
- b. Developing advice on content sequencing and prioritisation of foundational concepts.
- c. Provide a paper to Ministers for their consideration of any changes to the F-2 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics and additional curriculum support materials.

Approach

ACARA will lead the process for the iterative review.

ACARA's F-12 Curriculum Reference Group (CRG) will be the key advisory group with oversight of key issues emerging from across the learning area update processes. ACARA's other existing advisory structures will also provide the mechanism for wider stakeholder engagement and consultation.

As the key users of the F-2 Mathematics Curriculum, practising primary teachers from across jurisdictions will be engaged in consultation throughout the iterative review process.

Subject matter teacher professional associations, academics and other key stakeholder groups will be engaged and consulted throughout the review process. This could include:

- participating in an initial forum to clarify the scope of the work and the consultation process
- providing feedback at key points in the review.

Curriculum Reference Groups and teacher focus groups will be established as required to provide advice and feedback on draft changes.

ACARA will work directly with the Schools Policy Group and the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee on delivery of the iterative review. Any proposed change to curriculum will be brought to EMM for consideration and approval.

Timeline

The iterative review will commence in March 2026 with advice and recommendations to Ministers to be provided at the 2026 Quarter 3 EMM meeting.