

The structure and development of the Australian Curriculum (Senior Years)

Q: When will the senior secondary Australian Curriculum be available?

A: The draft content for senior secondary Australian Curriculum English, mathematics, science and history will be available online for consultation from 14 May 2010 until 30 July 2010.

After feedback has been collated and analysed the draft curriculum content will be refined ahead of its final publication in late 2010.

Draft achievement standards for each course will be developed and made available for consultation in early 2011. It is anticipated that the final senior secondary curriculum, including content and achievement standards, will be ready for publication by mid 2011.

While the curriculum will be available in 2011, it should be noted that state and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities have policies and practices which will influence decisions about start dates for implementation of the senior years Australian Curriculum. The application of these policies will take account of decisions on implementation by all Education Ministers through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA).

Q: How will the Australian Curriculum for the senior secondary years affect current state and territory curriculum arrangements, including certification?

A: ACARA is developing the Years 11 and 12 curriculum, including content and achievement standards, for English, mathematics, science and history in close consultation with the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) in each state and territory.

ACACA agencies will continue to be responsible for assessment and certification of students in Years 11 and 12.

Where a course is developed nationally that covers the scope of learning in existing state or territory courses, the state and territory courses will be replaced with the Australian Curriculum. Other courses not covered within the Australian Curriculum will continue to be offered by the state and territory authorities, provided that the scope of learning in these courses is distinct from the scope of learning in the nationally developed courses.

Q: How is the draft senior secondary Australian Curriculum structured?

A: ACARA has developed draft senior secondary curriculum in English, mathematics, history and science. Specific curriculum content has been developed for 14 courses within as per the table below:

	Course
English	Essential English English as an Additional Language English Literature
Mathematics	Essential Mathematics General Mathematics Mathematical Methods Specialist Mathematics
Science	Physics Chemistry Biology Earth Environmental Science
History	Ancient History Modern History

Each course contains units of nominally 50-60 hours duration with four units studied over a two-year period. Units 1 and 2 are designed to follow on from learning in Year 10. Units 3 and 4 are designed to be

more challenging and assume prior knowledge of learning contained in Units 1 and 2.

For each of these 14 courses for senior secondary years curriculum, ACARA will develop curriculum content and achievement standards. Content will be described for each unit, with achievement standards described for each year of schooling (i.e. per pair of units). No content elaborations will be developed for the senior secondary curriculum.

As for K-10 curriculum, the cross-curriculum dimensions and general capabilities will be embedded across the senior secondary curriculum as appropriate to each course.

State and territory curriculum and certification authorities will provide any other elements that complete the course packages in accordance with local state or territory requirements.

Q: Are there indicative hours for each of the senior secondary courses?

A: ACARA will not specify required hours for each senior secondary course. ACARA has provided an indicative time allocation of 50-60 hours for each unit in a course to help guide the curriculum writers (each course contains four units to be studied over a two-year period). ACARA recognises that time allocations for subject areas currently vary across jurisdictions, education systems and schools.

Q: What are the assumptions about prior learning for the Australian Curriculum senior secondary courses?

A: What are the assumptions about prior learning for the Australian Curriculum senior secondary courses?

The curriculum needs of students in the senior secondary years are defined as much by workforce and training needs and further learning ambitions as they are by previous learning experiences.

While there will be a variety of learning pathways before Year 11, some assumptions about prior learning are necessary. For example, it is assumed that

students who choose to undertake a senior secondary course have the prior knowledge and skills developed up to Year 10. Each course in the senior secondary Australian Curriculum will indicate the assumptions about prior learning of students who may wish to undertake study of the course. The decision on whether a student should enrol in a course in the senior years, taking into account assumptions about prior learning, is a matter for discussion at the school level.

Q: How are these courses similar or different to what currently exists in the states and territories?

A: The suite of 14 senior secondary Australian Curriculum courses has been selected to reflect current practice across states and territories. In addition, writers of the Australian Curriculum have examined state/territory and overseas curriculum documents. As a result, there are many elements of the specific draft senior secondary Australian Curriculum courses that will be familiar to teachers. The full extent of the differences between the draft Australian Curriculum and each state and territory curriculum will be mapped by ACARA to assist states and territories through the implementation process.

Q: When will draft achievement standards for the senior secondary curriculum be available?

A: Only the draft content for the senior secondary curriculum is available for consultation between 14 May and 30 July 2010. Given the different purposes and uses of current achievement standards in states and territories it will take longer to develop the Australian Curriculum senior secondary achievement standards. Development will occur through 2010 and draft achievement standards will be available for consultation in early 2011 and will then be available to accompany curriculum content for implementation

Q: What will draft achievement standards for the senior secondary curriculum look like?

A: For the senior secondary years of schooling, subject-specific achievement standards will be developed. It is expected that they will describe a range of levels of achievement expected of students studying the particular course. They will be designed to support reporting to students and parents, to ensure consistency of assessment and reporting across states and territories, and to contribute to the selection of post-school pathways. The Years 11 and 12 achievement standards will be designed to be applicable in jurisdictions with external examinations and with school-based assessment.

Q: Will there be any further development of senior secondary Australian Curriculum?

A: The extent of the senior secondary Australian Curriculum (i.e., the number of national courses available) in the first four subjects, and in other subjects, may increase over time. Additional senior secondary courses are currently planned for geography, languages and the Arts. Further senior secondary courses will be developed following decisions by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA).

Q: Is the set of courses in each learning area meant to meet the full range of student needs and interests?

A: The courses in English, mathematics, science and history, for which ACARA has drafted curriculum content, are consistent with courses that are currently provided by state and territory curriculum and certification authorities, although additional courses may also be available in various states and territories.

While individual courses are designed with particular student needs and interests in mind, the full range of student needs and interests will be met through suites of courses and/or through the full range of senior secondary courses from which any individual student can choose.

The current 14 courses that ACARA has developed will fit within the greater range of courses that are available in each state and territory.

Q: What flexibility is there for students to move between courses in the senior secondary years?

A: Each senior secondary course in the draft Australian Curriculum consists of four sequential units. Units 1 and 2 are designed to follow on from learning in Year 10. Units 3 and 4 are designed to be developmentally more challenging and assume prior knowledge of learning contained in Units 1 and 2.

There is some flexibility for schools and curriculum authorities to meet student needs and interests by, for example, allowing students to complete one unit in a course or subject and then transfer to another course or subject. Typically it is expected that schools and curriculum authorities will offer pairs of units, for example, 1 and 2 as a year-long course, with units 3 and 4 as the subsequent year-long course.

Q: Given that there is only curriculum content available for consultation will there be another opportunity to comment on curriculum content once achievement standards are developed?

A: Yes. The focus for consultation through to the end of July is on draft curriculum content, with the opportunity for people to provide feedback to the course structure, draft content and alignment with proposed K-10 content.

Once achievement standards have been developed, in early 2011, the curriculum content and achievement standards will be subject to further national consultation. This will provide opportunity for fine tuning the curriculum content in the light of proposed achievement standards.