

**acara** AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM,  
ASSESSMENT AND  
REPORTING AUTHORITY



**Monitoring the  
effectiveness of the  
Foundation – Year 10  
Australian Curriculum  
2015**





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# 1. Executive summary

The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the development of the Australian Curriculum and is committed to a process of curriculum development and renewal that focuses on providing world-class curriculum to enhance educational outcomes for all young Australians.

The development of the Australian Curriculum began in 2009 and by mid-2015 ACARA had developed curriculum for eight learning areas<sup>1</sup> (involving 26 subjects<sup>2</sup>) and made them available on the Australian Curriculum website.

ACARA's curriculum development process includes a monitoring phase, the details of which were noted by the Education Council in November 2013.

Monitoring is an ongoing improvement mechanism that provides the opportunity to collect and review recently published curriculum research and to collect, analyse and report feedback about the Australian Curriculum in a systematic and responsive manner. The first monitoring report was approved by the ACARA Board on 9 October 2014 and coincided with the publication of the Australian Government commissioned Review of the Australian Curriculum.

The 2014 monitoring report identified the manageability of the Australian Curriculum, with a focus on the primary years of schooling, as the chief concern regarding the Australian Curriculum. The Review of the Australian Curriculum similarly identified curriculum overcrowding as a significant concern. This theme was taken up by the Australian Government, and Education Council approved action proposed by ACARA to address, amongst other things, the perceived overcrowding in the Australian Curriculum.

To address the overcrowding, ACARA reduced the quantity of content descriptions and achievement standards in the Australian Curriculum, redesigned the F-6/7 Humanities and Social Sciences learning area and refined the presentation of the Australian Curriculum website.

Other actions taken by ACARA to address issues arising from the Review include strengthening the presence of phonics and phonemic awareness in the curriculum, improving parental access and providing additional support for teachers of students with significant intellectual disabilities.

The 2015 monitoring report includes feedback and research collected in the period from July 2014 to June 2015. The 2015 monitoring report is based on feedback from eleven federal, state and territory school and curriculum authorities, and feedback that two jurisdictions had provided earlier in 2014 which they considered was still current. Beyond school and

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<sup>1</sup> English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies Health and Physical Education, Work Studies

<sup>2</sup> English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business, Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, Visual Arts, Design and Technologies, Digital Technologies, Health and Physical Education, Work Studies, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese.

curriculum authorities six submissions were received from professional educators associations.

The 2015 monitoring report was approved by the ACARA Board on 10 December 2015. The major finding of the 2015 report is that there was a general level satisfaction with the curriculum reductions achieved during 2015 coupled with a strongly expressed desire for curriculum stability.

### *Recommendations*

It is recommended that during the forthcoming period of curriculum consolidation, with a focus on provision of additional resources to improve understanding, use of and access to the Australian Curriculum, ACARA will:

- Work with states and territories to provide specific and targeted feedback for the purposes of the annual monitoring and evaluation of the Australian Curriculum.
- Continue to monitor other issues identified in the 2015 monitoring report and report on trends related to these issues in the 2016 monitoring cycle.

## 2. Background

Development of the Australian Curriculum began in 2009 and by mid-2014, Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum for eight learning areas (nineteen subjects including four languages) had been developed and made available on the Australian Curriculum website. By mid-2015, a further seven languages had been developed.

The development of the Australian Curriculum by ACARA is guided by the [Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians](#), the [Shape of the Australian Curriculum \(v4.0\)](#), the [Curriculum Design Paper \(v3.1\)](#) and the [Curriculum Development Process \(v6\)](#). The process of curriculum development involves four interrelated phases; shaping, writing, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

State and territory curriculum and school authorities are responsible for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in their schools, in line with system and jurisdictional policies and requirements. They make decisions about the extent and timing of take-up and translation of the intended Australian Curriculum into the curriculum that is experienced by students.

In the monitoring phase of curriculum development ACARA's focus is the effectiveness of the curriculum rather than its implementation, although it is recognised that the two are inextricably linked. Factors such as the readiness of systems, schools and teachers; the extent of change from current curriculum provision, available resources, timeframes and progress with implementation of the full scope of the Australian Curriculum, differ across each state and territory and potentially impact the effectiveness of the curriculum. It is the differences that provide opportunity for rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum.

The annual monitoring process is described in the Education Council noted paper [Monitoring and Evaluation of the Australian Curriculum](#).

Monitoring is an ongoing improvement mechanism that provides the opportunity to collect and review recently published curriculum research and to collect and analyse feedback about the Australian Curriculum in a systematic and responsive manner. The annual monitoring report enables the monitoring of and the tracking of issues and the sharing of the findings of curriculum and school authorities.

The first *Monitoring the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum* report was completed by ACARA in October 2014 and coincided with the publication of the Australian Government commissioned Review of the Australian Curriculum. The Review sought to evaluate the robustness, independence and balance of the Australian Curriculum and to examine the content and development process. The Australian Government notes on its *Students First* website that the Review also sought to understand whether the Australian Curriculum is delivering what students need, parents expect and the nation requires in an increasingly competitive world; characteristics of curriculum effectiveness that correspond with the intent of the monitoring process. Not surprisingly, the Review identified some issues in common with the 2014 monitoring report.

Actions taken by ACARA to address common issues are detailed in the chapter relating to the Review of the Australian Curriculum in this report, and referred to where relevant in other chapters.

### 3. Methodology

This monitoring report includes feedback and research collected in the period from July 2014 to June 2015.

In July 2015 ACARA's chief executive wrote to state and territory curriculum and school authorities, peak education professional associations and parent bodies, and other key stakeholders inviting submissions to the 2015 monitoring process. He noted that feedback on any aspect of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum would be welcome, but that ACARA is particularly interested in views on the presentation and functionality of the Australian Curriculum website and how it aids teachers in their understanding of the Australian Curriculum. Thirteen submissions representing seventeen organisations were received in response to this request. (A list of organisations that made submissions is provided at the end of this report).

Other sources of information used in the construction of the 2015 monitoring report were:

- Feedback from key stakeholders related to the 2015 revisions of the Australian Curriculum
- Reviews and research reports
- Trend data related to the use of the Australian Curriculum website
- Media scans
- National assessment programs, including National Assessment Program- Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and National Assessment Program (NAP) sample testing programs

No new results from international assessment programs Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) or Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) became available during the 2015 monitoring period.

Data collected from the various sources were managed through SharePoint and HP Records Management systems. Curriculum leads and senior project officers and their managers within the curriculum business area of ACARA were allocated responsibility for identifying data and developing specific parts of the report.

ACIL Allen Consulting were commissioned to develop a research synthesis of relevant research published between July 2014 and June 2015.

## 4. Review of the Australian Curriculum

### Summary

During 2014 the Australian Government commissioned a Review of the Australian Curriculum and appointed reviewers Professor Ken Wilshire AO and Dr Kevin Donnelly. The Terms of Reference of the Review describe the Review as an evaluation of the development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum considering the robustness, independence and balance of the curriculum and an examination of its content and its development and refinement processes. The final report of the Review was released on 12 October 2014 and is available on the Australian Government's [Students First website](#). The report made 30 key recommendations on issues as diverse as the inclusion of phonics and phonemic awareness in the Australian Curriculum: English and the composition of ACARA's Board..

The release of the [Initial Australian Government Response](#) to the Review was timed with the release of the final report of the Review and encompassed five themes which if addressed in a collaborative manner they proposed would result in a strong, robust national curriculum. The five themes were:

- i. Resolving the overcrowded curriculum
- ii. Improving parental engagement around the curriculum
- iii. Improving accessibility for all students
- iv. Rebalancing the curriculum; and
- v. Reviewing the governance of ACARA.

At the 12 December 2014 Education Council meeting ministers referred the Review recommendations relating to themes i to iv to ACARA for advice. In March 2015 ministers approved actions proposed by ACARA to address the referred themes. ACARA undertook to:

- Reduce the quantity of content descriptions and achievement standards by end June 2015
- Strengthen the presence of phonics and phonemic awareness in the Australian Curriculum by June 2015
- Redesign the F-6/7 Humanities and Social Sciences learning area by end June 2015
- Refine the presentation of the Australian Curriculum website by end October 2015
- Propose actions for improving accessibility for students with disability by end June 2015
- Improve parental access to the Australian Curriculum by end October.

ACARA employed consultative processes in the period from March 2015 to June 2015 to revise the Australian Curriculum as required. A sample of practising primary teachers and writers/lead writers developed draft changes to content descriptions and achievement standards. Tracked change versions of these draft documents in conjunction with survey instruments were used to consult with state and territory curriculum and school authorities and other key stakeholders (17 April to 15 May 2015). Feedback from 55 different organisations and 98 individuals was collated in a [consultation report](#) that was discussed with the F-12 Curriculum Reference Group (15 June) and from which the final revised version of the Australian Curriculum was developed.

Respondents expressed diverse views about the draft changes to content descriptions and achievement standards. On balance, respondents noted that the manageability of the primary curriculum had been improved, although there was variation regarding the extent of the improvements and many suggestions about further improvements.

The revision of the Australian Curriculum and the proposed actions for improving accessibility for students with disability were endorsed by ministers at their September 2015 meeting and the revised curriculum was published as version 8.0 on the Australian Curriculum website on 20 October 2015. Materials to increase parent access to the Australian Curriculum are on track to be presented to ministers and published on the Australian Curriculum website by the end of 2015.

### ACARA's actions to resolve the overcrowding and rebalance the curriculum

ACARA has made revisions to the previously available Australian Curriculum in response to the themes concerning resolving the overcrowded curriculum and rebalancing the curriculum referred to it by Education Council. Revisions involved:

- The volume of content in learning areas has been reduced by deleting, clarifying and simplifying content descriptions where appropriate, and moving references to examples to the content elaborations. This has improved clarity of content descriptions and has resulted in an overall reduction in the number of content descriptions in the curriculum.
- Single learning area achievement standards in addition to the existing subject-specific achievement standards have been provided in the learning areas of Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts and Technologies.
- The presence of phonics and phonemic awareness in the Australian Curriculum: English has been increased. The sound and letter knowledge sub-strand of the language strand has been strengthened and renamed phonics and word knowledge, comprising three threads; phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabet and phonic knowledge and spelling. Text on the Australian Curriculum website has been revised to support these changes and the glossary expanded to include all relevant terms.
- A single F-6/7 Humanities and Social Sciences replaces the subjects of History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business at these year levels. This change has resulted in a significant reduction in the volume of content descriptions and an improvement in the manageability of the primary curriculum.
- The representation of Western influences on Australia's system of government, the role of founders and key features of constitutional development, beliefs and values of Christianity, and the role of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the executive arm of government have been strengthened in the Australian Curriculum for Humanities and Social sciences.

Changes to information on the Australian Curriculum website provide a more streamlined presentation of the curriculum. In version 8.0 of the website:

- Substantial reductions in the volume of supporting information for each learning area, general capability and cross curriculum priority have been made by removing duplication and paring back background detail

- A consolidated F-10 overview section reduces repetition and provides clearer and more concise information about the whole F-10 Australian Curriculum including the relationship between learning areas, general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities; the common structural parts of each learning area and their purpose; the contribution of each learning area to a student's learning in Foundation - Year 2, Years 3 – 6 and Years 7 – 10; and the implications for teaching, assessing and reporting
- Consistent navigational headings have been applied to the presentation of each learning area.

ACARA consulted with 31 organisations representing parent bodies, advocacy groups, principals, academics, and school and curriculum authorities to develop preferred actions to better support teachers of students with significant intellectual disability and will undertake the following during 2015/16:

- Provide access to relevant resources developed for teachers of students with significant intellectual disability via the diversity section of the Australian Curriculum website
- Add to the Australian Curriculum website additional illustrations of practice focusing on how teachers plan and make age-appropriate adjustments for students with significant intellectual disability
- Include examples of different ways students might demonstrate what they know, understand and can do to the Australian Curriculum general capabilities continua for literacy, numeracy, and personal and social capability.

The development of parent materials that improves parental access to the Australian Curriculum is on track for completion and publication on the Australian Curriculum website by the end of 2015. The materials are written in plain English and focus on what students will learn in each learning area for their current year, or band of years, for schooling. The materials are visually engaging and use infographics, diagrams and images to illustrate the information. They will be accessible to parents and carers via a parent section of the Australian Curriculum website.

## 5. 2014 Findings and actions

Two major themes emerged from ACARA's 2014 *Monitoring the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum* report.

### Overcrowding

Concerns about the manageability of the whole Australian Curriculum, especially for primary schools, were raised by a range of authorities and other stakeholders. It was usually expressed as curriculum 'overcrowding' but variously referred to the volume of content, the number of achievement standards and the introduction of new and unfamiliar subjects and/or content to the primary curriculum. Concerns regarding 'overcrowded' curriculum also related to particular implementation issues including time allocations for subjects, timelines, the extent and rate of change, as well as specific local curriculum and school authority requirements and contexts.

### Stability

Desire for a measured and steady approach to evaluation and subsequent changes to the curriculum to not add to the burden of teachers and schools. Several states, particularly New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, expressed reservations about further curriculum change at that time and the importance of a period of curriculum stability to draw meaningful conclusions about the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum. Feedback from a range of education authorities also recognised that considerable effort and time had been invested by teachers, schools and educational authorities to implement the Australian Curriculum.

### Other findings

In addition to the curriculum manageability issue, Queensland school and curriculum authorities recommended that a cohesive, overarching F–12 framework for the whole Australian Curriculum needed to be developed. This framework would articulate the skills, capabilities and behaviours all students should develop and explain how these are reinforced through different learning areas/subjects. It would make clear concepts/ideas contained across the learning areas and the years of schooling, using consistent language, to support teachers to make connections and see commonalities, differences and progressions.

Some school and curriculum authorities identified that greater consistency in the achievement standards, both across and within learning areas would be an improvement.

The Northern Territory raised particular concerns about better meeting the needs of students for whom English is an additional language or dialect (EAL/D students), including the amount of content in the Australian Curriculum and the additional time needed by these students.

## 2014 Recommendations and actions

*It was recommended that ACARA undertake a formal evaluation of the manageability of the Australian Curriculum, with a focus on primary years of schooling*

The Australian Government commissioned 2014 Review of the Australian Curriculum identified that the amount of content teachers are required to teach, particularly primary teachers, is excessive. It cited the excessive weight of content including the inclusion of general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, the lack of integration of the curriculum in the primary years, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences as exacerbating the overcrowding of the curriculum.

The reviewers noted that immediate and substantial action was required to address the overcrowding of the primary curriculum and suggested that a restructure and reduction of volume.

The Australian Government's Initial Response to the Review shared the reviewers' concern regarding overcrowding based on the evidence collected and their first theme to be addressed in response to the review was to resolve the overcrowding in the curriculum.

ACARA has taken action to address overcrowding in response to the relevant agreed theme. The details of the actions taken are available in the Review of the Australian Curriculum section of this report.

*It was recommended that ACARA develop an overarching framework for the whole Australian Curriculum that articulates the broad knowledge, skills, capabilities and behaviours students should develop and explain how these are developed through the parts of the Australian Curriculum, bringing the framework to the ACARA Board during 2015.*

The ACARA Board considered this matter. Members discussed the language, construct and purpose for a rationale and framework. A new overarching framework statement would be a retrospective refit. It was agreed that work on these should not be progressed further at this time, but that links to the sources of the content included in the Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians, as well as the Shape of the Australian Curriculum and Curriculum Design paper, should be added to the Australian Curriculum website. It was seen that action will provide for greater connection between the policy rationale and framework – on the ACARA and Education Council websites – and the outcome of this work, the Australian Curriculum.

*It was recommended that ACARA continue to monitor other issues identified in the 2014 monitoring report and report on trends related to these issues in the 2015 monitoring cycle.*

Each learning area report in the 2015 Monitoring the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum includes reference to issues raised in the 2014 report and comment on actions taken. Issues that continue to be raised are carried forward and noted in the learning area key point sections as ongoing issues.

## 6. Use of the Australian Curriculum website 2014 - 2015

The Australian Curriculum website is both the repository for and the method of dissemination of the Australian Curriculum. It is therefore important that content, design, structure and functionality of the website combine to perform these functions effectively. Investigation of the quality and effectiveness of the website was carried out using quantitative information from website usage data and qualitative information gathered from a user survey and invited submissions to the monitoring process.

Analysis of the Australian Curriculum website usage data from 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015 was undertaken to provide insight into how the Australian Curriculum website is used in relation to: number and length of visits, new or returning visitors, time on website, most visited pages, bounce rate (the percentage of visitors who enter the site and "bounce" - leave the site - rather than continue viewing other pages) and web browser used and operating device.

An online user survey was conducted. The survey was designed to determine:

- Who the users of the Australian Curriculum website are (user group)
- How the users behave on the website (how they found the site, how often they visit, what their goals are when visiting the site)
- Overall user satisfaction including what they like most and least about the website

State and territory curriculum and school authorities, peak education professional associations and parent bodies, and other key stakeholders were invited to make submission to the 2015 monitoring process. The invitation noted that ACARA is particularly interested in views on the presentation and functionality of the Australian Curriculum website and how it aids teachers in their understanding of the Australian Curriculum.

### **Context**

Teachers across Australia access the curriculum according to the policies of the jurisdiction in which they work. States and territories have taken several approaches to facilitate teacher access to the Australian Curriculum.

The method by which teachers across Australia access the Australian Curriculum is varied:

- In five jurisdictions (ACT, NT, Queensland, SA and Tasmania) teachers access the Australian Curriculum directly from the Australian Curriculum website
- In three jurisdictions (Victoria, WA and NSW) teachers access the Australian Curriculum via a local website that has represented the Australian Curriculum (to varying degrees).

The usage data and the user survey relate specifically to the Australian Curriculum website and do not include information gathered from local sites representing the Australian Curriculum.

## Key findings

- The overall quality of the content, useability and functionality of the website are better than satisfactory.
- There are some specific areas of functionality and navigation that require attention
- The phase 1 Australian Curriculum learning areas English, Mathematics, History and Science are the most frequently visited pages, although the number of visits per page across the Australian Curriculum is increasing
- Additional communication and consultation regarding the website would be welcomed.

## Usage data

Usage data was collected and collated using Google Analytics.

### Summary of the analytics for the period 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

User insight	Result	Comparative benchmark (from Google)
Visits	4,428,372 sessions <sup>3</sup> 1,570,787 users <sup>4</sup> 19,271,762 pageviews <sup>5</sup>	
New vs. Returning Visitor	32.6% (1,444,670) new visitors 67.4% (2,983,702) returning visitors	
Location	94% in Australia; and of those: 25% in Queensland 19% in Victoria 17% in Western Australia 15% in New South Wales 14% in South Australia	
Time on site	5 minutes, 29 seconds	5 mins 23 secs
Bounce rate <sup>6</sup>	34%	48.2%
Web browser used	34% Chrome 27% Internet Explorer 23% Safari 11% Firefox 5% Other	
Operating device	81% desktop computer 10% mobile device 9% tablet device	

<sup>3</sup> Total number of sessions within the date range. A session is the period time a user is actively engaged in the website, app etc. all usage data (screen views, events, ecommerce etc.) is associated with a session.

<sup>4</sup> Users that have has at least one session within the selected date range. Includes both new and returning users

<sup>5</sup> Pageviews is the total number of pages viewed. Repeated views of a single page are counted

<sup>6</sup> Bounce Rate is the percentage of single-page visits (i.e. visits in which the person left the site from the entrance page without interacting with the page)

Most visited pages	
	/Curriculum (24%)
	/Mobile (11%)
	/humanities-and-social-sciences (7%)
	/English (6%)
	/mathematics (6%)
	/science (4%)
	/the-arts (3%)
	/generalcapabilities (3%)
	/health-and-physical-education (2%)

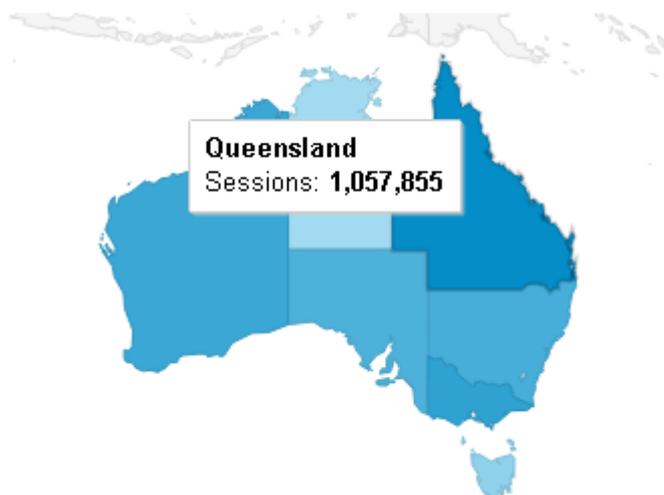
From an analytics perspective, the Australian Curriculum website performs above average on all the measurable elements compared to the Google benchmark.

The bounce rate of 34% is a comparatively good score to the industry standard bounce rate of 48%. This means fewer people than the industry average leave the Australian Curriculum site after visiting just the homepage. This means users have more likely 'ended up in the right place'.

### How many visits, from where and what they look at...

In the 12 month period analysed, the Australian Curriculum website received just over 1.4 million unique visitors.

The majority of website traffic is from return visitors (67%), that is, those who have been to the website in the previous year. However, a substantial proportion of traffic is from first time users (33%).



As would be expected, the majority of users are in Australia, with Queensland attracting the most visitors.

### Accessing the Australian Curriculum website

The majority of people access the website from a desktop computer (81%).

Weekly data shows that traffic to the Australian Curriculum website drops dramatically at the weekend and that there are comparatively fewer weekend visitors compared to weekdays.

## Mobile devices

Around a fifth (19%) of Australian Curriculum website visits are undertaken on mobile or tablet devices. The bounce rate for those accessing via a mobile device is over 10% higher than compared to a desktop. This is most likely due to the website being harder to access on a mobile device.

## Conclusions

- The majority of users are first time users of the website (57%) with return users accounting for 43% of traffic.
- Compared to Google benchmarks for time spent on site, page depth and bounce rate, the Australian Curriculum website performs well.
- The majority of users are in Queensland with geographic location generally following population mass and visit the site during weekday working hours from a desktop computer using Internet Explorer.
- The most visited pages, after the homepage are: Mathematics curriculum, English curriculum, Curriculum overview, Science curriculum, Humanities and social sciences curriculum.

## User Survey

The online survey was designed to gather information that enabled better understanding of the characteristics of the people who use the website, including:

- Who the users of the Australian Curriculum website are (user group)
- How the users behave on the website (how they found the site, how often they visit, and what their goals are when visiting the site)
- Overall satisfaction including:
  - What users like most about the website
  - What users like least about the website
  - Overall usability rating based on the standardised usability questionnaire System Usability Scale (SUS).

## Methodology

Survey questions were a mixture of open and closed, and included the standard usability Likert Scale questions.

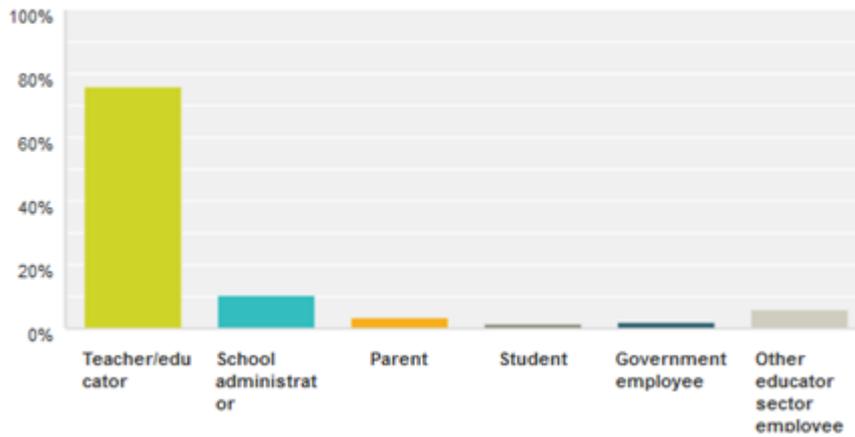
The survey was delivered via a link on the Australian Curriculum website and was publicised on social media and news items on the ACARA website. The survey was made available during August and September 2015.

Analysis focused on determining who the respondents were, their motivations in visiting the website, and any potential usability issues.

## Results

192 survey responses were received.

*What user group do you best fit within when using the Australian Curriculum website?*

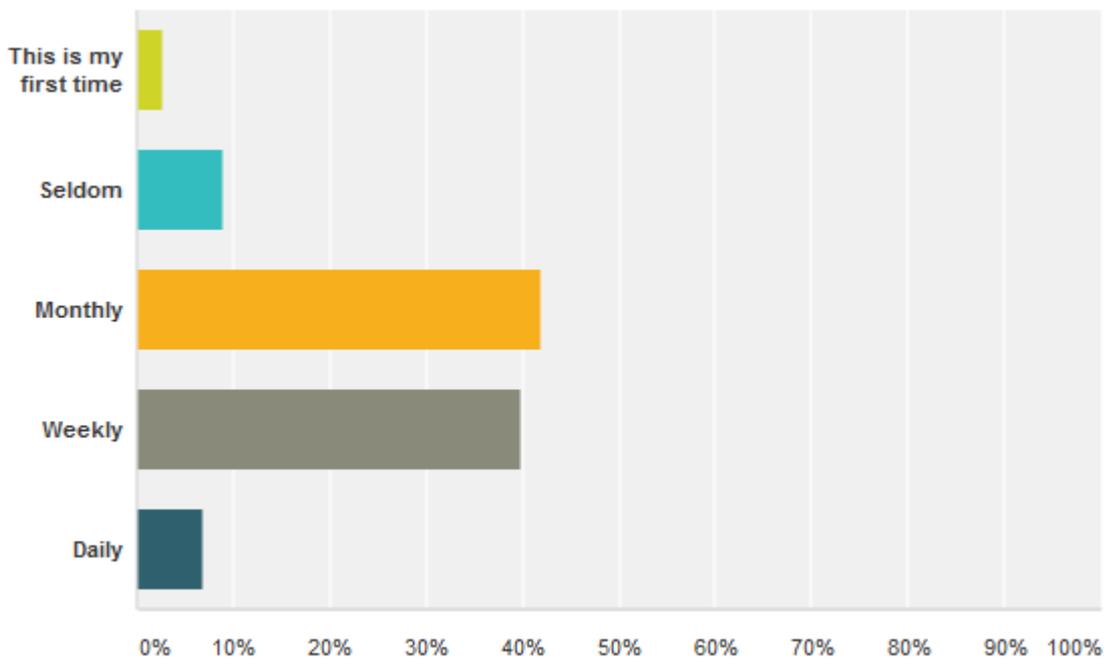


The vast majority (76%) of those who completed the user survey identified themselves as being teachers/educators.

*How did you discover the Australian Curriculum website?*

29% of participants found the Australian Curriculum website via search engines, with another 20% by word of mouth. A larger number of respondents stated 'Other' (29%).

*How often do you visit this website?*



Only 2.6% of survey respondents were visiting the website for the first time. Most are regular visitors, visiting weekly or monthly.

*What is your main reason(s) for visiting the website today*



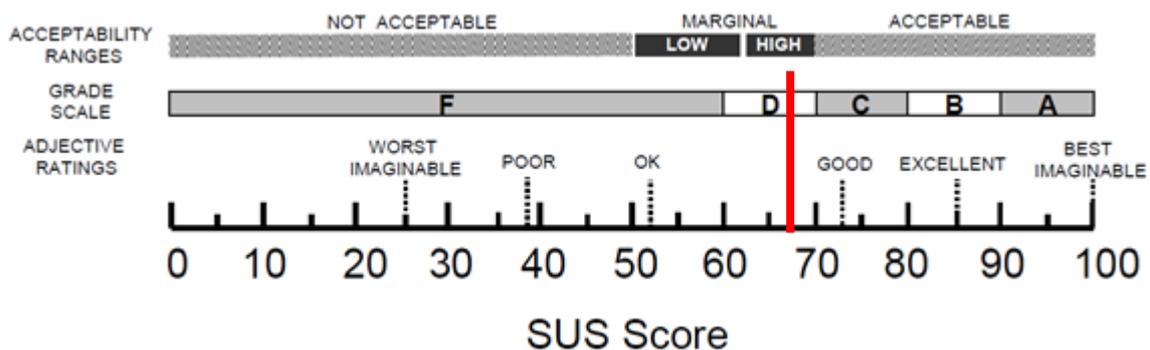
The vast majority of respondents (47%) said they were visiting for specific or general information about the Australian Curriculum.

### Satisfaction with the website

Survey respondents were asked questions using a Likert scale to give a rating on the System Usability Scale (SUS). This scale gives a global view of subjective assessments of usability. The measurements of usability have several different aspects including effectiveness (can users successfully achieve their objectives?), efficiency (how much effort and resource is expended in achieving those objectives?) and satisfaction (was the experience satisfactory?).

The overall usability (SUS) score for the Australian Curriculum website based on respondents' answers was **66.7 – between 'OK' and 'good'**.

The following chart shows the normalised standard usability score (i.e. the greater the number the more usable the website) and where the Australian Curriculum website sits within the various ways of grading a score of this type. Although not an exact science, it gives an indication of where the Australian Curriculum website sits comparably.



Source of SUS information: [Usability Professionals](#)

## What do you like MOST about the site?

Overall participants liked two main things about the website:

- Navigation around the site e.g. *It is easy to navigate and has explicit information.*
- The tools available on the site e.g. *The various ways to filter information according to what you need. The fact you can print in two different ways.*

Other comments included:

- *The work samples - keep them coming*
- *That it is always available online accessible from anywhere.*

## What do you like LEAST about the site?

A lot of feedback to this question was related to areas outside of the scope of this website survey, including commentary on the structure of the Australian Curriculum in relation to other states and territories for example: *my boss still says to use WA curriculum! We all need to be working from the same document if we are all doing NAPLAN testing.* Comments of this nature have been excluded from analysis.

The only negative general theme about the Australian Curriculum website was its navigability with some users saying it was hard to navigate. There were no other negative themes identified, but other comments included:

- *The inadequacy of linkage of content descriptions to cross curriculum priorities and general capabilities. This is something that many teachers would value being able to apply filters to, and is missing from even the most obvious areas of the website*
- *A website needs to be populated with more illustrations of personalised learning in the key learning areas.*
- *Having to download work samples individually rather than on bulk.*
- *It can be difficult to compare different age groups or curriculum strands without lots of flicking back and forth.*
- *It is just too hard to find what you need. Even the search engine doesn't get you to the right thing first go.*
- *More elaborations and examples needed for content descriptors especially for primary maths.*
- *Sometimes (I) find it tricky to find relevant capabilities and maths proficiency strand information. Elaborations take time to open up individually.*
- *It took me ages to find the columns view of different subjects across a year level.*

## What changes, features or improvements would you like to see on the website?

Many respondents said there were no improvements they could identify. However, a sample of comments that fall within the scope of the Australian Curriculum website are:

- *Samples of multi-age lessons.*
- *I would like to see some samples of Units of work in all curriculum areas*
- *Cleaner look, not as cumbersome. Better searching/linking between curriculum overlap. Better connection between subject areas*
- *I would really like to be able to download the scope and sequences into an Excel format.*

- *Comparing age groups of same subject field, or summary/ graph of when key ideas in certain subjects are introduced/ practiced/ grasped/ carried to another area of study.*
- *Make the web site and app more interactive so teachers can plan and use the web site plan and assess.*
- *More examples of various work samples and their grades for all year levels.*
- *Make the filter system work properly.*
- *Big changes to the actual curriculum, rather than the website. I think it's great having the curriculum online, but I don't find it to be a great curriculum.*
- *Make it as easy to use and intuitive as QCAA*
- *Easier search options.*
- *Links to free resources.*
- *More of the content for particular LAs on one page - rather than bits of information from that LA over various tabs.*

## Conclusions

- Results from the user survey were in the main relatively positive about the Australian Curriculum website, citing the navigation and tools available (i.e. printing the Curriculum, filtering etc) as useful.
- However, some users found information hard to find and the navigation poor (possibly pointing to a poor information architecture).
- Survey participants scored the website using a Standard Usability Score (SUS) with a score of 66.7 (between 'OK' and 'good').

## Submissions

Thirteen submissions representing seventeen organisations were received in response to ACARA's request. Of these, four submissions representing seven organisations provided feedback about the Australian Curriculum website.

The website content and functionality received favourable comment, with users generally satisfied with the structure of the Australian Curriculum website and accessibility of materials via the website, although there was some concern about specific functionality. Positive comments included mention of colour coding and filters that allowed choice of layout.

*...the structure of the website was good, written information was clear and generally did not have problems accessing information via the website. (Department for Education and Child Development in South Australia 2015 p11)*

*Educators use search and filter options and there does not appear to be concern with how these features operate (Northern Territory Department of Education 2015 p7)*

It was noted by both the Northern Territory and South Australian respondents that while educators access the learning areas of the Australian Curriculum on the website, they are not accessing the general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities with the same frequency.

Areas identified for attention include specific navigation aspects and printing options.

*Some teachers are struggling with finding a way to view/download the full glossary from the website. (Australian Literacy Educators' Association 2015 p1)*

*Some of the teachers said that the website was difficult to navigate for specific things like elaborations. In addition, teachers were frustrated with the limited print options and documents being formatted in PDF only. (Department for Education and Child Development in South Australia 2015 p3)*

Concern was expressed by Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) and the Department for Education and Child Development SA (DECDSA) regarding the necessity for high speed internet connections to access, download and print the Australian Curriculum website.

Finally, more communication and consultation regarding the website were suggested by the AGDE and DECDSA.

Issue	Response
Presentation of threads and GCs in all subjects requires review with respect to consistent coding and sub-headings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> <li>▪ Changes to the website prior to publication of version 8.0 may have addressed this matter concern</li> </ul>
Concern that access to the Australian Curriculum relies on high speed internet connection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> </ul>
Continue to consult on the presentation and functionality of the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> </ul>
Ensure on-going monitoring of the useability of the Australian Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> </ul>
Provide additional information about using Scootle and the Australian Curriculum website and how best to use the supports and materials for planning, teaching and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> </ul>
Improve the efficiency of downloading and printing the online curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> <li>▪ Changes to the website prior to publication of version 8.0 may have addressed this matter concern</li> </ul>
Develop a visual or graphic roadmap to describe all the elements of the Australian Curriculum website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> <li>▪ Changes to the website prior to publication of version 8.0 may have addressed this matter concern</li> </ul>
Review navigation to specific items on the Australian Curriculum website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> <li>▪ Changes to the website prior to publication of version 8.0 may have addressed this matter concern</li> </ul>

## 7. Feedback about the Australian Curriculum

### The whole curriculum

The Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum is described as a three-dimensional curriculum that recognises the central importance of disciplinary knowledge, skills and understanding; general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

Disciplinary knowledge, skills and understanding are found in the eight learning areas of the Australian Curriculum: English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies and Languages.

Alongside disciplinary knowledge, the Australian Curriculum provides seven general capabilities: Literacy; Numeracy; Information and Communication Technology Capability; Critical and Creative Thinking; Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding; and Intercultural Understanding. The general capabilities comprise an integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that equip students to be lifelong learners and able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world. General capabilities are developed and applied, where relevant, through the learning areas.

The Australian Curriculum also includes three current cross-curriculum priorities that are developed, where relevant, through the learning areas. These are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia; and Sustainability. The priorities are not separate subjects in themselves; they are addressed through learning area content, where appropriate. A set of organising ideas that reflect the essential knowledge, understanding and skills has been developed for each cross-curriculum priority.

When comparing the Australian Curriculum with those of Scotland and New Zealand, Priestly, Laming and Hume (2015) contend that the national curricula across the three countries express global curriculum policy shifts: from specification of content (knowledge) to a skills-based approach, a greater emphasis on the centrality of the learning, and greater autonomy for teachers in curriculum implementation.

### *Key points*

The Australian Curriculum has been the focus of increased attention during this monitoring period. The release of the final report of the Review of the Australian Curriculum and the subsequent action taken to address the four agreed themes arising from the Review have been reported and discussed in local and national news media.

Some special interest groups considered the response to the review to be an opportunity for additional reforms and calls for the inclusion of additional content were increased. Although present, there have been fewer articles that have recognised and reinforced existing Australian Curriculum content.

The most frequently raised issue in the media and in submissions from key stakeholders and about the whole curriculum has been that of the overcrowded curriculum.

*...too much content for a number of learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities (DECD SA 2015 p3)*

This issue was addressed and a revised curriculum published on the Australian Curriculum website as part of ACARA's response to the four agreed themes. Details regarding the revisions made are noted in the chapter on the Review of the Australian Curriculum. ACARA will monitor responses to the revised curriculum.

Although there has been an overwhelming weight of opinion supporting the recent changes to the curriculum, the research of Lyle (2014) warns against continuous change over the long term noting that increased teacher workloads, burnout and change fatigue adversely affects teachers' capacity to implement the curriculum. The research also notes that teachers overwhelmed by cumulative change demand clear guidance and suitable resources.

The inclusion of work samples and illustrations of practice within learning areas were noted as valuable in three submissions representing six organisations (NTDE, DECD SA and ALEA). These submissions further encouraged ACARA to expand the available samples to include the full scope of the curriculum and suggested a focus on quality assessment items with folios of work samples illustrating the range of responses to a quality item.

## English

Since the endorsement of the Australian Curriculum: English F-10 by the council of federal, state and territory education ministers in December 2010 states and territories have put in place implementation processes. By 2015 all states and territories are implementing the F-10 Australian Curriculum: English.

The English curriculum is organised around three interrelated strands of language, literature and literacy and may be viewed from multiple perspectives, including by year level, strand, elaboration and language mode (reading and viewing, writing, listening and speaking).

### Key points

The data have been examined and trends within and across sources identified.

Website analytics suggest that users are engaging with the English Curriculum with over 1 152 000 visits to the English area, over 860 000 users accessing the curriculum and approximately half of these looking at unique page views. The rationale was viewed almost 90 000 times while the achievement standards and the general capabilities were viewed over 20 000 times.

In March 2015 ACARA received unanimous support from state and territory education ministers to address the issues highlighted in Review of the Australian Curriculum: English, particularly concerning strengthening the presence of phonics and phonemic awareness in the F-2 content. Strengthening the presence of phonics and phonemic awareness is one component of the four themes identified in the Australian Government's response to the review, which ACARA was tasked to action. As part of ACARA's response a forum of phonics experts was consulted and the curriculum was revised. The existing 'Sound and letter knowledge' sub-strand has been strengthened and renamed as 'Phonics and word

knowledge' and now encompasses the thread Phonological and phonemic awareness (F-2), Alphabet and Phonic knowledge (F-3) and Spelling (F-6), and provides a more explicit and sequenced set of content descriptions for the concepts that underpin the development of reading and spelling.

In response to concerns about the amount of content, ACARA committed to providing links to illustrations of primary curriculum management to support the integration of English content. Twenty illustrations of practice, from a range of F-6 school contexts, are available on the website to address curriculum management issues.

Feedback from ALEA indicated that teachers are requesting an expanded glossary clearly defining all important terminology. The English glossary of terms has been revised and expanded to include items related to the phonics and word knowledge sub-strand and a number of other terms from the curriculum, not previously defined.

ALEA also requested more work samples and ongoing review of work samples to keep pace with teachers' increasing understanding of the breadth of the curriculum. They also suggested the inclusion of assessments that catered for a range of abilities would be a useful resource for teachers. Supporting student diversity through improved access to the curriculum for students with disabilities is a current area of focus for ACARA.

ACARA has been reviewing and amending the English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource EAL/D Learning Progression F-10. An improved version of the resource, which reflects more precise descriptions of EAL/D learner progress and supports teachers with information about expected growth across phases of learning, will be available on the ACARA Curriculum website. Through continued consultation with States and Territories and the Australian Council of TESOL Associations this resource will be updated and improved. Currently the summary statements for F-2 students, who are consolidating their English language skills are being reviewed.

The NSW Department of Education (NSWDoE) welcomed the inclusion of contemporary textual practices in the curriculum and noted that the department was producing a professional learning resource to demonstrate the use of quality literature, to develop the intellectual quality dimension of the quality teaching framework.

There may be a need to review the alignment of the achievement standards to the writing content descriptions, in the early years, to better provide more explicit information for teachers.

## Mathematics

The Australian Curriculum: Mathematics was endorsed by the council of federal, state and territory education ministers in December 2010 and states and territories began work with their schools to implement the curriculum.

By 2015 all states and territories are implementing the F-10 Australian Curriculum: Mathematics.

The Australian Curriculum: Mathematics is organised around the interaction of three content strands and four proficiency strands. The content strands are *Number and Algebra*, *Measurement and Geometry*, and *Statistics and Probability*. They describe what is to be taught and learnt. The proficiency strands are understanding, fluency, problem solving, and

reasoning. They describe how content is explored or developed, that is, the thinking and doing of mathematics.

Four key issues were identified in the 2013 – 2014 monitoring report. The glossary, its consistency and its usability, particularly for primary teachers, was a major concern. There were suggestions that the explanation of terms be written in a format that would be inclusive of all teachers of F-10 mathematics. A project to update and refine the Mathematics glossary in response to these concerns is currently in its final stages.

There continue to be suggestions that Pythagoras' Theorem be moved from Year 9 to Year 8 to align with international practice and the curriculum mapping from the TIMSS. ACARA will monitor the relative impact of this difference over the next twelve months noting in particular the experience of teachers in Australia who presently teach Pythagoras' Theorem in Year 8 (such as in NSW).

ACARA has reviewed the progression of some content descriptions from Years 4-10 and made some minor word changes for the sake of clarity in response to concerns about continuity of skills progression. ACARA has responded to concerns about the inclusion of the cross-curriculum priorities in some elaborations and revised or deleted elaborations.

### *Key Points*

The Review of the Australian Curriculum highlighted strengths of Mathematics, including its accessibility, clarity and ease of use. Despite identifying some minor concerns, professional associations and states and territories overall asked that no significant changes be made to the curriculum in the immediate future. An exception to this was the inclusion of the cross-curriculum priorities, which were identified as being tokenistic and unlikely to 'substantially enrich the learning of mathematics' (Catholic Education Office Melbourne). ACARA has reviewed tagging of the priorities for suitability and relevance.

Website analytics demonstrates that users across all stages of schooling F–10 and across all states and territories are regularly accessing the mathematics curriculum on the Australian Curriculum website. The mathematics curriculum had the second highest number of page views of all learning areas.

Throughout 2014-2015 the Mathematics curriculum continued to be monitored. Feedback on the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics was largely general in nature. The New South Wales Department of Education expressed appreciation for way proficiencies, general capabilities and work samples provided direction for teachers when engaging teachers in 'real-world mathematics. However, the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT) raised concerns about the proficiencies, and their articulation across year level descriptions, content and achievement standards. This was echoed by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC). AAMT also expressed concern about the clarity of achievement standards, (again echoed by the QCEC), the links between the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the foundation year of mathematics, and the lack of a conceptual map of the 'big ideas' of mathematics. QCEC noted that there had been no change in the volume of content in response to the review.

There is considerable rhetoric and research both internationally and locally about the importance of STEM to school education and the future of the productive nature of the

economy. ACARA has been involved with an action research project in conjunction with the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers where schools were asked to integrate the STEM subjects into a learning and assessment program. The students and teachers were filmed and work samples collected to be part of a suite of resources. The results and findings will be published on the Australian Curriculum website at the end of the year.

Issue	Response
The lack of clear articulation of proficiencies across year level descriptions, content and achievement standards	ACARA has begun a project 'Enhancing mathematics proficiencies' to address concerns about the use of and engagement with the proficiencies in Australian Curriculum: Mathematics. The project will involve the collection of illustrations of practice and work samples that will act as a resource for teachers.
Links between the EYLF and the foundation year of Australian Curriculum: Mathematics	ACARA will revisit the ELYF information sheet and investigate the possibility of strengthening linking documentation to support transitions.
Clarity of achievement standards	ACARA will investigate the approach to achievement standards in mathematics to determine how they can be strengthened.
No change in volume of content	ACARA did not reduce the volume of content as this was not highlighted as a concern in the Review of the Australian Curriculum.
The lack of foregrounding of the 'big ideas' of mathematics	ACARA will investigate the need for a document that outlines the 'big ideas' of mathematics and links them to content.

## Science

The Australian Curriculum: Science F-10 was endorsed by the council of federal, state and territory education ministers in December 2010 and all states and territories are now implementing it.

In line with the feedback from the 2013-2014 monitoring report the following changes have been made to the Science curriculum:

- Content was reduced and refined especially in the science as a human endeavour strand
- Content descriptions and achievement standards were refined to improve alignment, progression and ensure consistent use of language

### Key Points

Throughout the 2014-2015 reporting year, the Science curriculum website pages were accessed by more than 1.066 million users. The most commonly viewed web pages were the curriculum (637,626) and the rationale (279,505). The greatest number of website viewers, in order of access have been from: Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. Access to the Science curriculum website has significantly increased compared to the previous year (1.06 million vs 0.71 million) which could be explained by the fact that all states and territories are now fully implementing the curriculum.

Several strengths have been identified about the quality of the Science curriculum, particularly from professional associations and state and territory educational and school authorities. In its response to the work done to address the agreed themes, Australian

Science Teachers Association (ASTA) complimented the curriculum for being well-structured, challenging and robust:

... the current national curriculum that was developed through an exhaustive consultation process, agreed upon by each state and territory, is truly comprehensive, is academically rigorous and has a dynamic framework (ASTA, 2015).

The presentation and structure of the curriculum was also seen as a strength by state and territory education and school authorities. In 2015 monitoring submissions it was reported that the curriculum was well structured and easy to follow. The content descriptions, elaborations and achievement standards are considered to be straightforward and provide basic ideas to support the planning process (DECDSA, ATSA). The inquiry strand was also singled out for commendation as supporting 'teachers in connecting students' learning to real world contexts that are relevant and engaging' (NSWDoE,).

The connections between science, technology, engineering and mathematics through the general capabilities was identified as a strength by the NSWDoE. The role played by Science in supporting the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills was also raised in various media and journal articles and reports:

The global economy is changing. New technologies and smart companies lead. New industries and new sources of wealth are emerging. New skills are required for workers at all levels ... At the core of almost every agenda is a focus on STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Ian Chubb, 2014 quoted in Commonwealth of Australia, 2015).

However, the need for the Australian Curriculum to contribute to deeper, more consistent and improved technology skills was identified by a range of stakeholders including governments, academics, and the media. For example, the Office of the Chief Scientist noted the following in its publication *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia's Future*:

The Government must ensure that the skills of STEM graduates are aligned with workforce needs through ... working with educators to identify how required skills can be built into school and post-secondary courses (Australian Government, 2014)

The importance of STEM and the incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills into curriculum has also been acknowledged by leading education jurisdictions in other countries such as Canada, Japan, Singapore, UK and the USA (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015).

In addition to the call for strengthening of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills in the Science curriculum, overcrowding of the primary curriculum, the use of unclear and ambiguous language and the lack of alignment between content descriptions and achievement standards were raised as issues throughout the reporting year. This is exemplified in the DECDSA monitoring submission:

Some sections are overly wordy and contained too much jargon. This was applicable to ... Science ... where many teachers suggested a need to improve the clarity of the language used, simplify the content and improve the alignment between all content (i.e. content descriptions, achievement standards, and scope and sequencing).

A related concern raised in the reporting year is the lack of progression in the scope and sequence, particularly in relation to Earth and space and physical sciences ‘where the concepts alternate and topics do not repeat’, thereby making multi-age groups difficult to manage (QCEC).

State and territory education and school authorities also raised issues in response to revisions that were proposed to the curriculum following work done to address the agreed themes. Of particular concern was the need for clarification on the achievement standards, including the recommendation that they be presented in dot-point format or deconstructed to make them clearer.

The table below summarises ACARA’s response to the key issues raised in the 2014-2015 reporting year.

Issue	Response
The overcrowding of the curriculum in the primary years	Addressed in the revisions made in response to the agreed themes reductions to the number of content descriptions
Lack of clarity in the language used, complicated content descriptions and lack of alignment between all curriculum elements (i.e. content descriptions, achievement standards, and scope and sequencing)	Addressed in the revisions made in response to the agreed themes (as above) and through incorporation of specific feedback provided by stakeholders towards providing enhanced clarity and refinement to the content descriptions and achievement standards
STEM has been identified as a priority area in many educational areas and Science should support this through the general capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACARA has run a STEM trial project in 2014-2015 which has sought to identify successful learning in integrated areas using the Australian curriculum; reports, supporting resources and work samples are in the process of being developed at the time of writing</li> <li>• Curriculum connections work is also occurring between learning areas and is on the work plan for 2015-2016</li> <li>• ACARA is involved with other projects related to connected-curricula work such as the Murray-Darling Basin Authority</li> </ul>
Disjointed content structure, particularly in Earth & Space and Physical Sciences where the concepts alternate and topics do not repeat; this make multi-age groups difficult to manage	<p>Provide advice on the Australian Curriculum website to support teachers with planning and making connections between sub-strands of the curriculum and progression within sub-strands from year to year.</p> <p>Continue to monitor</p>
Clarifying the specifics of the achievement standards by dot pointing or deconstructing to make clearer	Suggested by one state jurisdiction only; Noted and will continued to be monitored

## Humanities and Social Sciences

In the 2014-2015 year, the endorsed Australian Curricula for History and Geography were published on the Australian Curriculum website. The Australian Curricula for Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business were published on the website and available for

use by states and territories awaiting endorsement by the Ministerial Council. Final endorsement occurred in September 2015.

In line with feedback from the 2013-2014 monitoring report, the following changes have been made to the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area of the Australian Curriculum:

- The development and publication of a landing page that provides a coherent framework (key ideas and common skills) for the humanities and social sciences subjects (Australian Curriculum. v.7.2, published on 8 October 2014)
- The development of one Humanities and Social Sciences learning area achievement standard for each year level from Foundation – Year 7. The curriculum for the humanities and social sciences now provides primary school teachers with a choice of learning area or subject-specific achievement standards (Australian Curriculum v 8.0).

### *Key Points*

Throughout the 2014-15 reporting year, the Humanities and Social Sciences website pages were accessed by more than 1,130,000 users. The most commonly viewed site was History (537,536), followed by Geography (434,403), Civics and Citizenship (101,428) and Economics and Business (61,330). There were also over 205,000 visits to Humanities and Social Sciences landing page. Of 432,840 visits to the Humanities and Social Sciences web pages (involving the curriculum, rationale and other sections), Queensland visitors viewed most often and most widely (27%), followed by Western Australia (19%) and South Australia (17%).

Several strengths have been identified, particularly from professional associations and state and territory curriculum and school authorities about the quality of the Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum.

According to professional associations, History and Geography have been received enthusiastically by teachers and resulted in high levels of student and teacher engagement. Professional associations and state and territory curriculum and school authorities also commented that these curricula are rigorous, robust, independent, well designed and successfully sequenced in relation to content and skills. In monitoring submissions, Geography was described positively in terms of its accessible language and “21st Century Geography skills/dispositions” (DECDSA) and for providing “clearly described inquiry through the application of geographical skills and tools” (NSW DoE). The inclusion of inquiry questions and the inquiry-based approach to learning was also seen as a strength of the History curriculum.

There was less feedback on Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business. The strengths of Civics and Citizenship include the curriculum’s structure and content that supports the development of students’ knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a citizen and equips them with the skills to participate in society. For the Economics and Business curriculum, the inclusion of consumer and financial literacy and its links to the *National Consumer and Financial Literacy Framework* were regarded by professional associations, government and non-government bodies as major strengths.

Despite positive feedback, several issues were also raised during the reporting year. Manageability of the curriculum, particularly in the primary years, was identified as a major concern by a number of stakeholders including state and territory curriculum and school authorities, teacher professional associations, teachers, the Australian Curriculum Review and the Australian Government's Initial Response to the Review. Some stakeholders such as the APPA (APPA) and Queensland curriculum and school authorities (QCAA, DETQLD, QCEC, ISQ) identified the addition of Economics and Business in Years 5 and 6 as contributing to the overcrowding of the primary curriculum. The research of Casinader (2015), Dixon et al (2015), Harte and Reitano (2015) and Preston (2015) shows that an overcrowded curriculum can lead primary teachers to integrate subjects without adequate discipline knowledge to inform decisions.

A related issue that was raised by professional associations, primary teachers and state and territory curriculum and school authorities is the lack of connection between the humanities and social sciences subjects at each year level and the difficulty this presents for primary teachers attempting to develop integrated teaching and learning programs. The subject of Geography was identified as contributing to the lack of coherence both within each year level and across the other subjects, primarily due to including contexts in Foundation – Year 4 that are developmentally inappropriate and its requirement for students to study the world and various continents from Year 3 onwards.

There was also criticism levelled at the volume of content in the secondary years of schooling, particularly in History and Geography. The requirement of studying 3 depth studies in History was raised by some state and territory education and school authorities as contributing to overcrowding and unmanageability of the current history curriculum in Years 7-10 with a call for reducing this to 2. The development of a single inquiry model and a more flexible website to assist school planning were proposed as solutions to the overcrowding of the secondary curriculum. In Geography, Year 8 was singled out as being overcrowded, with the curriculum for that year mandating too many case studies in relation to migration.

Although the professional associations and some state and territory curriculum and school authorities were complimentary of the curriculum in terms of its rigor and appropriate progression, Queensland's combined submission claimed the ideas in the Geography curriculum do not sufficiently progress and that the skills lack cognitive demand in Years 7-10. The lack of cognitive demand in the Geography Curriculum is supported by the research of Casinader (2015) who argued that the Geography curriculum relies too heavily on 'concepts that promote the description and explanation of knowledge, but not its critical evaluation', and that the curriculum 'minimises the elements of critical analysis that provide geography with its unique educational identity and value.

A further concern was raised about the lack of conceptual development in the subjects of Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business. State and territory education and school authorities, particularly DECDSA, argued that the concepts identified for these subjects are of a different order than those in History and Geography, which are tantamount to organising ideas or themes and are erroneously labelled as concepts.

The achievement standards were also identified as an issue by some state and territory education and school authorities. Queensland's combined submission argued that processes in the understanding paragraph and the skills paragraph are duplicated. Others expressed concern that year-by-year standards are difficult to differentiate. Also raised was the need for more support in making judgements about student performance, particularly

through Australian Curriculum website advice on using the achievement standards for assessment and reporting, and through work samples.

The need to rebalance the Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum was raised a number of times in media commentary, in some correspondence and by the Australian Curriculum Review and the Australian Government's Initial Response to the Review. Broadly, the treatment of this issue in the media was negative in nature, it sensationalised the issue, misrepresented the Australian Curriculum and reported one-sided views. The majority of articles contended that the curriculum does not provide sufficient emphasis on Christianity and the role of Western values and British heritage to the development of Australia. Examples include, "Aussie children 'ignorant' of liberal values and rights" (*The Australian*, 15 June 2015), "The new curriculum's rubbish history books" (Institute of Public Affairs Australia, 18 June 2014) and "Teaching western values in schools will help beat Islamic extremism" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 8 2015).

ACARA also received a number of submissions from organisations, interest groups and individuals claiming that essential content is missing in the Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum. The most significant of these was from the Asia Education Foundation requesting greater representation of the Asia and Australians engagement with Asia priority in the curriculum. Others requested the inclusion of the Magna Carta, 2015 being the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this document; the role of Australia's formal honorary system; budget literacy, and key figures and events in Australia's history such as Captain James Cook and Anzac Day. The request for rebalancing the curriculum and for including further content was not included in feedback from state and territory education and school authorities or by professional associations.

Academic and research literature in 2014–15, focused on the nature of conceptual design across the Humanities and Social Sciences subjects, and how these fail to deliver content that resonates with young people's contemporary world and futures, thus working "against the 21st century skills that the Australian Curriculum endeavours to foster" (Ditchburn, 2014), losing the curriculum shape paper's "focus on futures orientation, globalisation and the knowledge economy" (Hoepper, 2015). Writers assert issues as arising out of "pragmatic" curriculum development concerns.

The table below summarises ACARA's response to the year's key issues.

Issue	Response
The primary curriculum is overcrowded, especially in Years 5-6 with the addition of Economics and Business	Provide advice on the Australian Curriculum website that the curriculum is flexible and designed so that schools can decide what to teach and in what depth depending on their context and students  Continue to monitor
The Geography curriculum uses contexts that are not age appropriate (Foundation Year – Year 4)	Partly addressed in the revisions in response to the four agreed themes by developing learner-centred elaborations and ensuring reference to the world is in relation to Australia  Continue to monitor
Years 4-6 Geography - The identification of continents at each year level has been questioned in relation to their connectivity to other content within the year level.	Partly addressed in the revisions in response to the four agreed themes by drawing links to content across the subjects in elaborations and year level descriptions  Continue to monitor
5% only of proposed content descriptions for the Humanities and Social Sciences (F-6) specifically mention or directly imply Asia, showing a weak presence of Asia in the redesigned curriculum. Opportunities to contextualise studies of Asia are inhibited by the mandating of continents to year levels.	Addressed in part in the revisions in response to the four agreed themes by revising F-6/7 HASS elaborations which exemplify Asia and highlight Asia links to other concepts  Continue to monitor
Years 3-10 – Civics and Citizenship and Years 5-10 Economics and Business - the concepts that are identified for Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business are under-developed and not of the same order as those that have been identified for History and Geography	Concepts of interdisciplinary thinking have been identified for the Humanities and Social Sciences  Continue to monitor feedback on concepts for E&B and C&C
Years 7-10 – All subjects. A single inquiry model in Years 7 to 10 for all humanities and social science subjects, as proposed for F-6, would be supported as a way of reducing content and improving alignment with achievement standards	Continue to monitor
Years 7-10 History – Overcrowding due to the construct of 3 depth studies	Advice about spending 90% of time on 3 depth studies has been removed to afford flexibility to teachers on how much time to devote to depth studies  Provide advice on the Australian Curriculum website that the curriculum is flexible and designed so that schools can decide what to teach and in what depth depending on their context and students  Continue to monitor
Years 7-10 Geography, Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business – the curriculum is overcrowded	Provide advice on the Australian Curriculum website that the curriculum is flexible and designed so that schools can decide what to teach and in what depth depending on their context and students  Continue to monitor

Issue	Response
Years 7-10 Geography – The curriculum lacks progression in its development of ideas	Provide advice on the Australian Curriculum website indicating that the curriculum is flexible and designed so that schools can decide what to teach, in what order and in what depth depending on their context and students
Year 8 Geography - Content in Year 8 A study of migration patterns of four countries (a country from Asia, USA, China, Australia) is excessive	Provide advice on the Australian Curriculum website indicating that the curriculum is flexible and designed so that schools can decide what to teach, in what order and in what depth depending on their context and students
Years 7-10 Geography - Lack of cognitive demand in the skills	Continue to monitor
Achievement standards (all subjects) There is duplication of processes in the understanding paragraph and the skills paragraph	The achievement standards were revised in response to the four agreed themes. Continue to monitor
The achievement standards do not support judgements about student performance and advice on using the achievement standards for assessment and reporting should be provided on the Australian Curriculum site, and for work samples	Text explaining the design and use of the achievement standards has been included in the overview text for the F-6/7 Humanities and Social Science subject and in the Overview section of the Australian Curriculum
The achievement standards year by year are very difficult to differentiate. They need to be explicitly linked to the content descriptions.	The achievement standards have been revised. No action on explicitly linking to content descriptions as the standards are designed to be conceptual and to provide a statement of what students understand, not what they know.

## The Arts

The Australian Curriculum: The Arts F-10 was endorsed by the council of federal, state and territory education ministers in July 2013 subject to further consultation with Western Australia. This consultation is now completed. The curriculum was published on the Australian Curriculum website in February 2014 as available for use by states and territories awaiting endorsement by the Ministerial Council. Final endorsement occurred in September 2015.

The Arts curriculum contains five Arts subjects – Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts. It is built around the two interrelated strands of Making and Responding and is constructed in bands of years (Foundation to Year 2, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6, Years 7 and 8, Years 9 and 10).

### Key Points

In response to the 2013 - 2014 Monitoring Report ACARA assisted Western Australia in making decisions about The Arts that would meet their requirements.

ACARA also communicated with the Australian Council Deans of Education, to inform them of the feedback about lack of specialist arts training for undergraduate teachers, as recommended in the 2014 monitoring report.

In response to the four themes arising from the Review of Australian Curriculum there is now an option of single learning area achievement standards for Foundation to Year 6 students, enabling teachers to utilise these for the arts subjects taught instead of assessing five individual subjects. Students from F-6 can be assessed in each subject or in the learning area of The Arts, allowing greater flexibility for schools. The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) was opposed to the single learning area achievement standards for The Arts, stating that they will cause confusion. The implementation of the single area achievement standards will be monitored and NAAE's concern fully considered in that process.

NAAE also stressed their wish that digital work samples be made available by the second half of 2016 as per ACARA's work plan. Digital work samples in the Arts are due to be delivered on time for all five arts subjects.

The Review also requested an analysis of any repetition of the cross curriculum priorities and unnecessary emphasis that detracted from the Western canon of the Arts. ACARA has retagged the cross curriculum priorities and removed unnecessary repetition.

Over 2014-2015, there has been limited feedback on the Arts curriculum, reflecting its status as 'available for use; awaiting final endorsement'.

Google analytics demonstrates that users across all stages of schooling F-10 and across states and territories are highly engaged with The Arts curriculum on the Australian Curriculum website. Most page views are by the default row view. The most viewed subject was Visual Arts, followed by Music, Drama, Dance and Media Arts.

The greatest numbers of viewers have been from Queensland and South Australia. Western Australia was the source of the fourth highest number of views.

Issue	Response
The single learning area achievement standards will cause confusion with educators in the curriculum's implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the implementation of The Australian Curriculum: The Arts with particular attention to the achievement standards</li> </ul>
The digital work samples for all five subjects in the Arts need to be delivered by mid 2016.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACARA is due to deliver digital work samples in all five subjects according to the work plan and is currently on target to meet this commitment.</li> </ul>

## Health and Physical Education

The Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (HPE) was published on the Australian Curriculum website on 18 February 2014. The curriculum was made available for

use by states and territories while it was awaiting final endorsement from the Ministerial Council. Final endorsement occurred in September 2015.

In line with feedback from the 2013-2014 Monitoring Report, the following changes have been made to the HPE curriculum (Australian Curriculum.v.8):

- The inclusion of a diagram that explains the structure of the HPE curriculum and provides hyperlinks to explanations of each of the focus areas
- A revised rationale focusing on plain English
- ACARA has also mapped the Australian Curriculum to the *Daniel Morcombe: Child Safety Curriculum* and liaised with Education Services Australia regarding the availability of the resources of the latter through Scootle.

### *Key Points*

Throughout the 2014-2015 reporting year, the HPE curriculum has been accessed by more than 28,000 users. This number includes people from every state and territory across Australia. The greatest number of website viewers, in order of access, have been from; Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales.

Website users have accessed the HPE rationale more often than any other page. This may confirm that the five HPE propositions are being viewed by teachers across Australia. This conclusion is supported by the number of presentations and workshops on the five propositions at several Australian Council of Health Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) conferences across most states of Australia.

Generally, the HPE curriculum has been received favourably over this reporting period by academics, professional associations, schools and teachers. The HPE curriculum also received positive mention in the Review of the Australian Curriculum.

The national professional association, ACHPER, has provided strong support for the overall content of the HPE curriculum as well as acknowledging the extent of its development process as evidenced in the two position papers in this reporting period. The assertions of the position statements have strong foundations in both research related to children and adolescents and in current curriculum.

*ACHPER considers that the Australian Curriculum: HPE was developed by an inclusive and extensive consultation process and deserves the opportunity to be fully supported, endorsed and then implemented in all Australian schools (ACHPER, Nov 2014a; ACHPER, 2014b).*

As part of ACARA's consultation with primary school teachers and leaders from every state and territory across Australia during this reporting year, the HPE curriculum was seen as highly relevant and manageable. More than 90% of all 159 responses were satisfied that they had no issues with the HPE content descriptions in terms of: teacher knowledge and capacity, resources, time, assessment and reporting.

The future-orientated content of the HPE curriculum has also received strong support by academics and experts, In particular, the inclusion of social and emotional skills in the HPE curriculum has been supported by research confirming the connection between the

development of these skills and increased academic achievement (OECD, 2015, Bailey, 2014).

The importance of developing these skills has also been recognised by renowned authors Peter Senge and Daniel Goleman who detail three core skill sets in the classroom—understanding self, other, and the larger systems within which we operate—and why these competencies are needed to help students navigate a fast-paced world of increasing distraction and growing interconnectedness (2014).

Apart from concerns raised and dealt with through the review process, the two most significant issues with regard to the HPE curriculum between July 2014 and June 2015 were in relation to domestic violence and radicalisation and how the Australian Curriculum, and HPE in particular, supports student learning in relation to these issues.

Public discourse on the role of schools in preventing violence against women has been growing. The discourse includes the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Luke Batty Foundation's Never Alone campaign, advocacy for respectful relationships education in all schools through the curriculum from the COAG Advisory Panel and Australian of the Year Rosie Batty, and announcements from ACT, Tasmanian, NSW, and Victorian Governments that respectful relationships education will be delivered from Foundation to Year 10.

Representation and inclusiveness of gender diversity is another issue that has been raised by researchers, community groups, service providers, not for profit organisations, parent groups and the media. One example is a report from the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (YAW CRC) where research found that 72% of young people have experienced abuse because of their sexuality or gender identity. The report proposes that inclusion in school (both amongst peers and in the school curriculum) are important (Robison, Denson, Ovenden, Davies, 2014).

The importance of inclusive curriculum has been reiterated by both the Australian Human Rights Commission Children's Rights (Nicholson, Ball, Ross, 2014) and UNESCO in their guidelines for Physical Education (McLennan, Thompson 2015).

Other issues raised in relation to the HPE curriculum have included the number of concepts in the curriculum, difficulty with integrating the strands, issues relating to assessment and reporting, progression across bands and overcrowding in Years 7-10. This feedback has been provided by the APPA and state and territory curriculum and school authorities.

2014/15 key issues and relevant responses are outlined in the table below.

Issue	Response
<p>Domestic Violence</p> <p>There is no specific mention of domestic violence by name. Unless instruction on domestic violence is mandated it is unlikely to be taught.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No action</li> <li>▪ Relationships and sexuality, safety and mental health and wellbeing are already focus areas in the HPE curriculum. For example, knowledge, understanding and skills are expected to be taught <i>that will help students establish and manage respectful relationships; strategies for dealing with relationships when there is an imbalance of power; and negotiating consent.</i></li> </ul>
<p>Gender diversity</p> <p>The Australian Curriculum is seen to oppress and silence those who don't conform to heterosexist ideals (LGBTQI students).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HPE explicitly states the need to be inclusive of LGBTQI students. Specific information has been retained in the HPE section of the website.</li> </ul>
<p>Sexuality education</p> <p>Sex education needs to be delivered through using a strengths based approach which caters for the needs of both boys and girls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> <li>▪ The HPE curriculum provides a framework for what all students should be taught. It provides an outline for teachers on what they need to teach and when in relation to sexuality education. Teachers and schools decide on teaching approaches and teachers make decisions on what and how to teach dependent on the age of their students and needs of their class.</li> </ul>
<p>Crowded curriculum – F-6</p> <p>Primary specialist HPE teachers are not provided with enough time to deliver the full content outlined in the Australian Curriculum: HPE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ACARA has taken action in response to the four agreed themes arising from the Australian Curriculum Review process resulting in a slight reduction in the number of content descriptions, explicit linking between the two strands of HPE and removal of duplication of content.</li> <li>▪ Timetabling is the responsibility of individual schools in states and territories</li> <li>▪ ACARA promotes the integration of the two strands of HPE.</li> </ul>
<p>Crowded curriculum Years 7-10</p> <p>Reduction in primary content results in post primary teachers needing to cover extra content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction of content descriptions in F-6 has been followed through into 7-10 by reduction in the same thread in these years</li> </ul>
<p>Concerns raised by primary teachers and leaders regarding the F–6 complexity of some HPE specific terms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The HPE glossary has been refined and written in a format that is inclusive of all teachers F–10 and work samples will assist in illustrating HPE concepts through examples of student learning.</li> </ul>
<p>Concern regarding primary teacher expertise in health and physical education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ACARA to continue to assist states and territories, professional associations and universities (as required) to support efforts to increase teachers' understanding about the HPE curriculum</li> </ul>
<p>Using achievement standards</p> <p>The level of assessment and reporting required is not clear – specifically secondary school concerns about A - E grading based on achievement standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No action</li> <li>▪ ACARA recognises that it is the responsibility of states and territories to provide advice, direction and structures for schools in relation to the extent of assessment and reporting needed to meet requirements.</li> </ul>
<p>The importance of social and emotional skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No action</li> <li>▪ Relationships, personal and social skills already focus strongly in the HPE curriculum.</li> </ul>

Issue	Response
Too many concepts embedded in content descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No action</li> <li>▪ The revised curriculum has been endorsed and is supported by an extensive range of stakeholders</li> </ul>
Current classroom practice does not reflect the intent that the two strands of HPE are interrelated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work samples will reflect inter-relationship of strands wherever appropriate and possible.</li> </ul>
Lack of clear progression across bands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actions taken in response to the four agreed themes resulted in improved clarity and progression across bands. It is expected that the annotated Work samples will also improve clarity</li> </ul>

## Technologies

The Australian Curriculum: Technologies was published on the Australian Curriculum website on 18 February 2014. The curriculum was made available for use by states and territories while it was awaiting final endorsement from the Ministerial Council. Final endorsement occurred in September 2015.

Education authorities in each state and territory determine the Australian Curriculum implementation timelines for schools. A number of states and territories are trialing the Technologies curriculum and developing implementation plans pending final endorsement.

The Australian Curriculum: Technologies, Foundation – Year 10 comprises two subjects: Design and Technologies and Digital Technologies. The curriculum is written on the basis that all students will study the two subjects from Foundation to the end of Year 8. In Years 9 and 10 student access to Technologies subjects will be determined by school authorities. The curriculum for each Technologies subject is organised into two strands: knowledge and understanding, and processes and production skills. The curriculum for each Technologies subject is written in bands of year levels: Foundation – Year 2, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6, Years 7 and 8 and Years 9 and 10.

As a result of ACARA's actions in response to the four agreed themes the following changes were made to the Australian Curriculum: Technologies:

- alignment of the content structure between Design and Technologies with Digital Technologies in the processes and production skills strand
- combining Food and Fibre Production and Food Specialisations in Years 5-6 to reduce the number of technologies contexts from four to three
- combining two Technologies and society content descriptions in Years 7 and 8
- changes to content descriptions to reduce complexity resulting in content descriptions that are generally more succinct, and demonstrate a stronger progression of learning
- the development of single achievement standards for Technologies as a learning area as well as the achievement standards for the individual Technologies subjects.

## *Key points*

The data has been examined and emerging issues within and across data sources identified.

There has been considerable media attention on the Australian Curriculum: Technologies, in particular the Digital Technologies curriculum. The issue of coding in the curriculum has been raised in federal parliament and by business leaders.

Website analytics demonstrate that users across all stages of schooling F–10 and across states and territories were regularly accessing the Technologies curriculum on the Australian Curriculum website. The most frequently visited pages were the curriculum for each subject, followed by the rationale and content structure. There were slightly more visits to the Design and Technologies pages.

Through media, correspondence and other feedback, there has been a high level of interest in the teaching of Digital Technologies, in particular computer science and coding. Most media commentary on this issue is positive. There has also been a keen interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and how this can best be supported by educators, government and industry. There have been many reports released, projects announced and discussions hosted to explore how best to address STEM education. Negative media tends to focus on cybersafety concerns and the potential impact of learning technologies on students.

The issue of manageability of the Technologies curriculum in the primary years was raised through the Review of the Australian Curriculum process. The suggested revisions endorsed by Education Council have generally been supported by these stakeholders.

Research relating to the field of digital technologies has focused on computational thinking, robotics and the how it is being addressed in a range of countries including Britain and Israel. While data has been gathered through the Digital Careers Bebras Challenge that will be useful as a benchmark there are only a small number of papers written by local researchers in relation to the Australian Curriculum: Digital Technologies.

There are a large number of papers presented at international conferences for Design and Technologies including PATT conference 29 proceedings that will inform future research in particular in relation to assessment. A small number of papers were published relating to the Australian Curriculum: Design and Technologies at the Technology Education Research Conference 2014.

Issue	Response
The language used in the Years 5–6 achievement standards is beyond many teachers without a specialist background	This concern will continue to be monitored as teachers begin to implement the curriculum. No further feedback raised in monitoring.
There is a need for the inclusion of integrated approaches to combining Digital Technologies knowledge and understanding content with each of the prescribed Design and Technologies contexts	Development of resources and professional learning by states and territories and through the Coding across the curriculum project may address this concern. The concern will continue to be monitored.
While Digital Technologies are an integral part of an education in Technologies they are more relevant and contextualized as a cross discipline focus.	This view is not generally supported by states and territories in consultation. The concern will continue to be monitored.
Reduce the amount of content within content description (ACTDEK003)	The concern will continue to be monitored.
Lack of designing and implementing and producing in Digital Technologies	The concern will continue to be monitored.
The language used in (ACTDEK012) is not clear enough to determine the content to be taught	The concern will continue to be monitored.
The sub strands in knowledge and understanding are too broad and give little detail with regard to depth and breadth	The concern will continue to be monitored.
The Digital Technologies outcomes are too advanced for Years 7 and 8 in relation to programming.	The concern will continue to be monitored.
Elaborations need to be more contextualized for Design and Technologies and provide more examples of services and environments.	The concern will continue to be monitored.
Achievement standards are unrealistic in suggested time allocations.	The concern will continue to be monitored.
Glossary could include annotated diagrams and is not sufficiently comprehensive.	The glossary was revised during 2014 and was endorsed by all states and territories. The concern will continue to be monitored.
Digital Technologies content descriptions need to be clearer.	A number of content descriptions have been recently revised. The concern will continue to be monitored.
The strategy to reword the achievement standard so that it does not mirror the content descriptions in some cases changes the focus of learning.	The concern will continue to be monitored.

## Languages

The Australian Curriculum: Languages for Chinese, French, Indonesian and Italian was made available on the Australian Curriculum website, awaiting final endorsement in July 2014. The Australian Curriculum: Languages for Arabic, German, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese was made available on the Australian Curriculum website,

awaiting final endorsement in March 2015. Final endorsement of the Australian Curriculum: Languages occurred in September 2015.

### Key Points

Throughout the 2014-2015 reporting year, the Languages curriculum has been accessed by more than 158,543 users. The most frequently visited language-specific curriculums were Italian (24,307), French (22,027), Chinese (21,971), and Indonesian (17,500). That the remaining languages were less frequently visited is not surprising given that they were only released on the Australian Curriculum website in late March 2015.

Minimal feedback on the Languages curriculum was received in the 2014-15 reporting year. The feedback that was received was very positive and the release of the curriculum welcomed by professional associations and described as 'ground-breaking' (*Babel*, v.49, no.1, 2014, p. 37).

A major strength identified in the feedback was the provision of language-specific curricula which recognises the distinctiveness of different languages. According to the Anne-Marree Morgan of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA):

*Considerations such as the balance of oracy and literacy learning in languages with scripts or alphabets different from learners' first languages, and, crucially, of the different cultures and contexts of use of languages, could now be considered and catered for breaking' (Babel, v.49, no.1, 2014, p. 38).*

Another strength identified by both professional associations and academics is that the curriculum recognises the need for differentiated curricula designed for different learners with different backgrounds in the F-10 years. The development of different pathways for learners of Chinese, for example, was welcomed by Andrew Scrimgeour as 'providing impetus towards improving the overall provision of appropriate courses for learners of diverse backgrounds in school-based Chinese language programs' (2014).

In addition its positive comments the AFMLTA has also called for the development of further language-specific curricula and the development of additional pathways in existing Australian Curriculum such as Modern Greek and Korean.

### General Capabilities

The general capabilities play a significant role in the Australian Curriculum in equipping young Australians to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century.

In the Australian Curriculum, capability encompasses knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions. Students develop capability when they apply knowledge and skills confidently, effectively and appropriately in complex and changing circumstances, in their learning at school and in their lives outside school.

The Australian Curriculum includes seven general capabilities:

- Literacy
- Numeracy

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding.

In the Australian Curriculum, the general capabilities are addressed through the content of the learning areas. General capabilities are identified where they are developed or applied in the content descriptions. They are also identified where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning via the content elaborations, which are provided to give teachers ideas about how they might teach the content.

Teachers are expected to teach and assess general capabilities to the extent that they are incorporated within the learning area content. State and territory school and curriculum authorities determine whether and how student learning of the general capabilities will be assessed or reported.

In line with the feedback from the 2013-2014 monitoring report and from agreed actions arising from the Review the following changes have been made to the Australian Curriculum: General Capabilities:

- substantial reductions in the volume of supporting information for each general capability have been made by removing duplication and paring back background detail
- presentation of general capabilities has been streamlined so the primacy of the learning areas is highlighted, clarity is improved and complexity is reduced.

### *Key points*

The data has been examined and emerging issues within and across data sources identified.

Google analytics demonstrates that users across all stages of schooling F–10 and across all states and territories are continuing to be engaged with the general capabilities on the Australian Curriculum website.

The key concern raised in feedback to date, particularly from state and territory education authorities, related to the need for more direction and provision of information about how the general capabilities can practically link to the learning areas and associated achievement standards, and how teachers can apply the general capabilities across the curriculum subjects. In relation to Student Diversity, feedback indicated that information relating to the general capabilities needs to further highlight content of pages and links across the curriculum for teachers using general capabilities to personalise learning, and that titles of pages on the Australian Curriculum website should better reflect the information they contain.

Media commentary focused broadly on concepts relating to developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and student health and wellbeing in the context of learning area content delivery and pedagogy. There was no specific commentary on the general capabilities.

Five themes were outlined in the Australian Government’s initial response to the Review of the Australian Curriculum. In response to the agreed theme ‘improving accessibility for all students’ ACARA has considered the extent to which the Australian Curriculum supports teachers to meet the needs of students with significant intellectual disability. The proposed action, to add more detailed information to the general capabilities continua to support teachers of students with significant intellectual disability, received general support during the consultation process implemented by ACARA and was subsequently approved by the ACARA Board.

Key issues and the relevant responses are outlined in the following table.

Issue	Response
The quality and relevance of the general capabilities continua	As a result of ACARA’s response to the four agreed themes the general capabilities learning continua have been reviewed and modified
Students with disabilities – more detailed information to be added to general capabilities learning continua	Review and rewrite Literacy, Numeracy and Personal and Social Capability learning continua to include examples of different ways students might demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.

## Cross Curriculum Priorities

The inclusion of the cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian Curriculum was endorsed by the council of federal, state and territory ministers in December 2010. They continue to retain that status.

The Australian Curriculum is both relevant to the lives of a diversity of students and addresses the contemporary issues students experience. In view of this and the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians, the curriculum continues to give special attention to the following three cross-curriculum priorities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia
- Sustainability.

### Key points

As a follow up to an issue for ACARA raised in Table 11 in the 2013-2014 monitoring report, the cross-curriculum priorities continued to be monitored throughout 2014-2015 and their placement in learning areas reviewed.

The connection of the cross-curriculum priorities to learning area content and elaborations has been strengthened and streamlined as an action arising from the four agreed themes. The Australian Curriculum website released in May 2015 shows a reduced presentation of cross-curriculum priority icons for content descriptions with each icon indicating an explicit relationship of the priority to learning area content.

The cross-curriculum priority statements for each learning area have been revised and consolidated in one location and appears as part of the introduction to each cross-curriculum priority in version 8 of the website released in October 2015.

Website analytics demonstrate that users across all stages of schooling F–10 and across all states and territories have been accessing the cross-curriculum priorities. The number of page views is lower than those experienced for the learning areas. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority received approximately double the views for Sustainability and more than three times that of Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia. The page views for each cross-curriculum priority ranked above the page views for the cross-curriculum priority statements within learning areas, suggesting that visitors are seeking more specific and comprehensive information.

While feedback received from stakeholders on the cross-curriculum priorities is limited, the comments that were received are generally positive and supportive of this dimension’s inclusion in the Australian Curriculum. Comments made by a number of teachers’ professional associations stress the value of the cross-curriculum priorities in their present form. DEDCSA argues for additional information on how the cross-curriculum priorities can ‘practically’ link to the learning areas and associated achievement standards.

For both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority and the Sustainability priority, media commentary was predominantly neutral with some supportive anecdotes while commentary on the Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia priority was positive.

Key issues and responses to these issues are outlined in the table below.

Issue	Response
Preparedness of initial teacher education students to teach the full dimensions of all three priorities as reflected in the priorities organising ideas	This is a matter for the consideration of state and territory authorities. No action from ACARA required.
The capacity of teachers to implement Aboriginal perspectives and content in line with the cross-curriculum priority	ACARA is currently developing guiding principles for teachers to better understand the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority

## Work Studies

The Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Year 9-10 was made available on the Australian Curriculum website, awaiting final endorsement, October 2014. It was endorsed by the Education Council in September 2015.

Work Studies delivers a school-based subject that provides opportunities for students to undertake vocational learning and develop work-readiness skills in preparation for further study towards a skilled occupation or further education after leaving school. This elective curriculum is available for students in Years 9 or 10 (one-year subject), or across Years 9–10 (two-year subject).

## Key points

A national curriculum allows schools, and states and territories to make decisions about when and how implementation will take place. Website analytics demonstrate that this elective subject is in its early stages of use by teachers with relatively few page views.

Feedback received from stakeholders has been minimal with acknowledgement of the particular value of Work Studies learning for students at risk.

Print and radio media showed extensive interest in Work Studies following its release. The commentary at that time was very positive.

## Diversity

The Australian Curriculum engages with issues of learner and discipline diversity as well as equity and access for every student in Australia. This is in response to The Melbourne Declaration, which emphasises students' right to an education that is equitable and embraces diversity.

The Australian Curriculum encourages learners to explore the ways that heightened social inclusion can expand, rather than constrain, knowledge, skills and understanding. In response to the presence of a wide range of human qualities, attributes and situations including the myriad of different cultures, capabilities/abilities, geographic, social and economic situations, backgrounds, ways of knowing, learning styles, values, beliefs, religions, and gender and sexual identities that comprise our society, the Australian Curriculum fosters critical inquiry, wherein learners are encouraged to identify and challenge stereotypes, racism, bias and other forms of discrimination.

Over 2014/2015, ACARA was regularly asked to respond to a range of issues relating to diversity, and how the curriculum caters for marginalised children and young people. These include issues such as gender diversity, mental health of rural students, the voice of girls and young women, domestic violence, and students at risk of radicalisation.

The importance of inclusive curriculum, policy and practice has been reiterated during this reporting period by both the Australian Human Rights Commission Children's Rights (Nicholson, Ball, Ross, 2014) and UNESCO in their guidelines for Physical Education (McLennan, Thompson 2015).

During this reporting period, representation and inclusiveness of gender diversity has been raised by researchers, community groups, service providers, not for profit organisations, parent groups and the media. One example is a report from the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (YAW CRC) where research found that 72% of young people have experienced abuse because of their sexuality or gender identity. The report proposes that inclusion in school (both amongst peers and in the school curriculum) are important (Robison, Denson, Ovenden, Davies, 2014).

### Key points

Suggestions to improve ACARA's overall approach to diversity was included in stakeholder feedback about the Australian Curriculum. (AISNSW)

Issue	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revise general diversity page titles</li><li>• Graphically design flowchart and make more prominent</li><li>• Present illustrations of practice collectively prominent</li><li>• Revise specific diversity page titles (SWD, GT and EAL/D)</li><li>• Incorporate new graphics</li><li>• Redesign downloadable version</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the diversity section on the Australian Curriculum website with a view to improved access for teachers.</li></ul>

### Primary

As the F–10 Australian Curriculum was developed, each of the learning areas included primary teachers and academics on their advisory groups. States and territories included primary nominees on each of the national panels during the shaping and writing phases. The curriculum was written to be flexible so that primary teachers could plan for their local context. The issue of an 'overcrowded curriculum' at a primary level was raised during The Australian Curriculum Review, and in the ACARA 2013-2014 Monitoring report.

### Key points

In the 2014 primary section of the Monitoring Report, ACARA identified several issues in Table 1 Primary perspectives – issues and responses – too much content in each learning area, the new subject of Economics and Business, number of subjects, content and achievement standards in Humanities and social sciences, demands placed on primary teachers to familiarise themselves and implement the entire Australian Curriculum and the difficulty to plan for multi-age classes in a primary setting. Through ACARA's response to the four agreed themes arising from the Review of the Australian Curriculum there was a strong focus on uncrowding the primary curriculum. Humanities and Social Sciences has been restructured (see HASS section in this report), single achievement standards have been written as an option for The Arts and Technologies learning areas, twenty illustrations of primary curriculum management have been published on the Australian Curriculum website and version 8 of the Australian Curriculum.

As part of its actions in response to the four agreed themes, ACARA undertook to work with key primary school principals and curriculum leaders recommended by the APPA. In 2015 ACARA held two workshops with the group; the first was when initial draft changes were made to the Australian Curriculum and then after proposed changes were made. Early in 2015 ACARA gained national feedback from primary school teachers about content descriptions. This feedback was considered by ACARA during the restructure of the Australian Curriculum for version 8.

Feedback from submissions in 2015 has mostly been in regard to learning areas, and their complexity for primary teachers (ALEA, NAAE) support for the development of work sample portfolios across the curriculum is clear (ALEA, Department of Education, Tasmania (DET),

DECDSA, Northern Territory Department of Education (NTDE)) as are further illustrations of practice (NTDE, DECDSA). Also the connection of content across learning areas that will lead to primary teachers more easily being able to produce integrated units of work (2014 Monitoring Report, DET, NTDE). The use of the curriculum in multi-age classes continues to be a challenge in some primary schools (DECDSA, DET 2014 Monitoring Report) and a suggestion is that work samples from multi-age classes may provide some support in this regard. It has also been observed by some that there is still some overcrowding (QCEC, QCAA) while others see that now that the curriculum has been endorsed it requires a period of implementation before further change (AGDET). APPA produced a report in response the Australian Curriculum Review; the overcrowded curriculum: a way forward (November 2014) and a response to the draft changes of the Australian Curriculum: APPA's Response to actions completed, future actions and anticipated outcomes (May 2015). APPA stated,

*APPA sees that some progress has been made with respect to the goal of reducing the number of learning areas and content of the Australian Curriculum.*

Website analytics demonstrate that users across all stages of schooling in all states and territories access the Australian Curriculum in the primary years. The illustrations of primary curriculum management have been accessed by users in most States and Territories since their release in April (over 6200 views). The majority of media commentary in the later part of 2014 was around a crowded curriculum in relation to the release of the Australian Curriculum Review. Examples include: "Paring back 'overcrowded' national curriculum a government priority" (*The Australian*, October 14 2014), 'Balanced curriculum' needed according to prominent principals (*7:30 Report ABC Television*, October 13 2014)

Specific issues in relation to the primary curriculum and learning areas can be found in learning area monitoring reports.

Issue	Response
Difficult to plan for multi-age classes as the content is different across year levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> <li>▪ Consider working with multi-age classes in the work sample collection process</li> </ul>
Disconnect between the Early Years Framework (EYF) and Foundation curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review ACARA information sheet about the connection between the EYF and the Australian Curriculum and make it available on the ACARA website</li> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> </ul>
Overcrowded primary curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A period of implementation with no change to the curriculum is required for teachers to gain familiarity and expertise</li> <li>▪ Continue to monitor</li> </ul>

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## 9. Submissions

### Federal, state and territory curriculum and school authorities

Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales

Australian Government Department of Education and Training

Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia

Department of Education, Tasmania

New South Wales Department of Education – Learning and Leadership

Northern Territory Department of Education, encompassing feedback from

- Northern Territory Department of Education
- Catholic Education Office Northern Territory
- Association of Independent Schools Northern Territory
- Christian Schools Association NT
- Northern Territory Board of Studies
- Northern Territory Principals' Association

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

### Professional educators associations

Australian Association for the Teaching of English

Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers

Australian Association of the Gifted and Talented

Australian Literacy Educators' Association

Australian Science Teachers Association

National Advocates for Arts Education