



National Curriculum

Background

Development of a rigorous, world-class national curriculum from kindergarten to Year 12 is underway, beginning with the learning areas of English, mathematics, science and history. A second phase of work will involve the development of national curriculum in languages, geography and the arts. National curriculum in the first four learning areas will be developed by 2010 for implementation by states and territories from 2011.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is overseeing development of the national curriculum. It is also responsible for the management of assessment and reporting at a national level. ACARA's work is guided by the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, which has been agreed by all Education Ministers. ACARA is advising Ministers on the approach to national curriculum development in the remaining learning areas in the *Melbourne Declaration*.

The ACARA Board is led by Professor Barry McGaw as Chair and Mr Tony Mackay as Deputy Chair, and includes one nominee from each state and territory, the National Catholic Education Commission, the Independent Schools Council of Australia and the Commonwealth. Dr Peter Hill was recently appointed as Chief Executive Officer of ACARA.

Key benefits of the national curriculum

The national curriculum will provide explicit agreement on the curriculum content and achievement standards that all Australian students should have access to – regardless of their socio-economic background or the location of their school. It will also provide parents, school leaders and teachers with a clear understanding of what needs to be covered in each subject at each year level.

The national curriculum will seek to equip young Australians with the skills, knowledge and capabilities they need to engage with and prosper in society, compete in a globalised world, and thrive in the information-rich workplaces of the future.

By bringing together the management of curriculum, assessment and reporting at the national level, ACARA will also help streamline and simplify national education governance. It is expected that this will reduce the current duplication of resources and costs across states and territories.

Progress

ACARA is making good progress in developing the national curriculum and has released a number of key documents, including framing and shaping papers to guide curriculum development.

Curriculum drafting in the first four learning areas commenced in May 2009 following extensive national consultations on the curriculum framing papers. The curriculum is being drafted by expert writers supported by advisory panels. The advisory panels are of two types – those with subject matter expertise and those with expertise in equity, diversity and stages of schooling.

Successful implementation will depend on meeting a number of key challenges, including:

- a well-supported teacher and school leader workforce
- appropriate physical and digital resources and infrastructure
- clear achievement standards, high expectations, and the ability to report and measure progress, and
- ensuring schooling is part of life-long learning supported by early childhood education as well as parental and community engagement.

The process and timeline for implementation is likely to vary by state and territory, depending on the extent of change between the national curriculum and existing state and territory curricula. Work is also underway to identify current programs and resources that can be used to support implementation.

Opportunities for involvement

ACARA will continue to engage in extensive consultations with the education community, including parents, teachers, principals and professional organisations in developing the national curriculum. Draft curriculum documents in the first four learning areas will be available for public consultation in early 2010.

Further Information

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