

Dr Michele Bruniges AM
Secretary
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE)
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Dear Dr Bruniges

Following on from my correspondence of 8 March 2021, I write to provide you with a further update on the progress of the Review of the F-10 Australian Curriculum ahead of the upcoming Education Ministers Meeting.

As you know, ministers agreed to the terms of reference for the Review in June last year. The terms of reference required ACARA, by the end of 2021, to “improve the Australian Curriculum by refining, realigning and decluttering” the content of the curriculum within its existing structure. This structure comprises:

- eight learning areas (English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, Technologies, the Arts, and Languages);
- three cross-curriculum priorities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, and Sustainability); and
- seven general capabilities (literacy, numeracy, ICT literacy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding, and intercultural understanding).

The existing structure also retains the presentation of curriculum content in its three core elements:

- content descriptions - that specify the essential knowledge, understanding and skills that young people are expected to learn, and teachers are expected to teach;
- achievement standards - that describe the expected quality or standard of learning students should be able to typically demonstrate by the end of each year; and
- content elaborations - as optional support material that provide teachers with suggestions and illustrations of ways to approach the learning area content.

Neither the development of the initial Australian Curriculum nor the 2014 Review involved public consultation on the full set of curriculum documents. This is the first time this has been done, and ACARA always hoped and anticipated that it would give rise to considerable public engagement and discussion.

This has proven to be the case since the release of the proposed revisions on 29 April. ACARA welcomes the debate. As the inaugural chair of ACARA, Emeritus Professor Barry McGaw, wrote at the time of the 2014 review:

The school curriculum expresses a nation’s aspirations for its next generations. The curriculum must strike a balance between developing young people’s understanding of their national history and culture and preparing them for a future that is increasingly global and largely unpredictable.

What constitutes essential school learning will always be contested because behind it is a debate about what knowledge is of most worth. Curriculum stirs the passions – and that is a good thing. Curriculum is never completed. It is never perfect and should always be a work in progress.

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Yours sincerely

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David de Carvalho
Chief Executive Officer

24 June 2021