

Syllabus development and management

Policy

Audience

This policy applies to all employees of the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).

Purpose

The policy outlines the QCAA's approach to developing and managing syllabuses, which includes:

- developing high quality and future-focused syllabuses that prepare students for post-school destinations in the 21st century
- ensuring that schools have access to senior syllabuses that connect with, and build on, the learning in the Prep to Year 10 Australian Curriculum
- using evaluation criteria to make decisions about the development and management of senior syllabuses.

This policy is supported by procedures and processes that outline actions and responsibilities to develop and manage the syllabuses for senior subjects.

Policy statement

The QCAA will act with professionalism and integrity when developing and managing syllabuses. Syllabuses will reflect an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the needs of stakeholders through:

- evidence-led and research-based decision-making practices
- engagement, and promotion of productive partnerships, with the education sector and the wider community
- strong governance approaches.

This policy, in accordance with a set of procedures, enables the QCAA to meet its requirements under section 9 (1) of the *Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014*, relating to syllabuses for senior subjects.

Principles

The following principles underpin the policy and procedures for developing and managing syllabuses for senior subjects.

Table 1: Principles

Principle	What this means for the agency
Accountability	Roles and responsibilities for developing and managing syllabuses are clear, transparent and aligned to the purpose of the syllabus review.
Consultation	The QCAA engages with stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives, ensuring decisions are well-informed and inclusive.

Equity	Syllabuses are designed to provide equal access to quality education and fair assessment, for all students, regardless of background.
Evidence-led and research-based	Decision-making practices are informed by relevant and credible research and evidence to ensure effectiveness and reliability.
Stewardship	Decisions about syllabus development and management are well planned to ensure procedures are conducted with integrity and resources are well managed, supporting sustainable implementation activities.
Transparency	Syllabus development and management policies, procedures and processes are clear and accessible to stakeholders, fostering trust and accountability.

Requirements

Syllabus development and management

Overview

The development and management of QCAA senior syllabuses takes place under the guidance and direction of the QCAA Senior Secondary Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Committee (SSCACC). The SSCACC endorses for Board approval the:

- development of a new syllabus
- review of senior syllabuses for revision, redevelopment, or retirement.

QCAA senior syllabuses are reviewed to ensure the curriculum is providing students with relevant and contemporary knowledge, understandings and skills.

Approach to senior syllabus development and management

The QCAA manages procedures for the development, revision, redevelopment, retirement or amendment of a senior syllabus to ensure the transparency of process, quality assurance and accountability requirements. This approach involves the QCAA monitoring syllabus enrolments, completion data, internal and external assessment results, stakeholder feedback or requests, and professional engagement. Monitoring may result in changes to policy or a request to review or develop a senior syllabus.

When evaluating a syllabus development or management proposal, the QCAA applies specific criteria to develop an evaluation report. This informs the decision to further review, revise, redevelop, or retire a syllabus, or to develop a new syllabus.

Syllabuses are reviewed individually or in groups, often within a broader learning area, to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

Developing a new syllabus

A new syllabus may be developed in response to the identification of a gap in the curriculum, to respond to changes in workforce demands, or other policy initiatives. It may also arise from stakeholder requests for new subject offerings.

To justify the development of a new syllabus, the QCAA conducts an analysis that is documented in an evaluation report. This report is used to assist in making a recommendation as to whether a new syllabus development process should begin. Following a recommendation, the SSCACC is asked to endorse the recommendation before final Board approval.

Revising, redeveloping or retiring a syllabus

Syllabuses are reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Changes may be necessary due to shifting workforce needs, evolving career pathways, and updates in research and policy. Stakeholder feedback may indicate that content is outdated or ineffective, while declining enrolments or inefficient resources can also trigger a review.

The evaluation criteria, outlined below, are used in an analysis or a syllabus management proposal that is documented in an evaluation report. This report is used to assist in making a recommendation as to whether a syllabus should be reviewed, and ultimately revised, redeveloped, or retired. Following a recommendation, the SSCACC is asked to endorse the recommendation before final Board approval.

Amending a syllabus

Syllabus amendments are made when changes are minor and self-evident. These adjustments typically involve correcting errors, clarifying terminology, or updating references. Unlike full syllabus reviews, amendments do not require extensive consultation or a review report.

The amendment process follows structured procedures to ensure accuracy and consistency, with all changes justified and aligned with syllabus principles. This ensures that syllabuses remain of a high quality and are responsive to stakeholder needs between scheduled syllabus reviews.

Evaluation criteria

To inform syllabus development and management decisions, the QCAA has adapted the evaluation criteria developed by the OECD.¹

Table 2: Evaluation criteria

Coherence	The extent to which the syllabus development or management proposal supports, complements, or is consistent with existing initiatives (e.g. how well does the proposal fit with assessment and certification processes, other curriculum or learning options, and/or alignment to the discipline or area of learning?).
Effectiveness	The extent to which the syllabus development or management proposal would achieve its expected objectives and intended results.
Impact	The extent to which the syllabus development or management proposal is expected to generate indirect or secondary higher-level effects (e.g. what difference does the proposal make and is it likely to achieve the rationale for the subject?).
Relevance	The extent to which the syllabus development or management proposal responds to stakeholders' needs (e.g. is the request doing the right thing for students in relation to career options and post-schooling pathways?).
Sustainability and efficiency	The extent to which the net benefits of the proposed syllabus development or management activity can be maintained and implemented, and is likely to deliver results in an economic and timely way (e.g. what resources are required to support assessment requirements and quality assurance processes?).

A set of focus questions for each criterion is provided to guide the evaluation of a syllabus development or management proposal.

¹ OECD. (2019). Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation. Retrieved from [OECD](#). This is an adaptation of an original work by the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this adaptation should not be reported as representing the official views of the OECD or of its Member countries.

Key stakeholders

QCAA works with our key stakeholders through all syllabus development and management processes. This collaboration promotes trust and supports continuous improvement by providing valuable feedback and support. Engaging with stakeholders ensures effective communication, cultural inclusion, and the development of syllabuses that support future-focused pedagogies and assessments.

Key QCAA stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Queensland students, teachers and schools
- School sectors: The Department of Education, Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ)
- Tertiary institutions
- Industry and employer groups
- Parents
- Professional associations
- Teacher unions
- Discipline or industry experts and practitioners
- Community or cultural knowledge leaders
- Other government departments.

Definitions

Table 3: Definitions of terms relevant to this policy

Stakeholder feedback	Stakeholder feedback is information gathered through, and provided in accordance with, the formal consultation processes outlined in the syllabus draft or syllabus review consultation pack.
Syllabus amendment	The process undertaken to add, remove, or correct information in a syllabus. This process typically occurs when the requisite change to the syllabus is self-evident and beyond the need for further enquiry or consultation.
Syllabus development	The process of developing, purchasing or borrowing a syllabus for a newly-proposed senior subject.
Syllabus management	The process of amending, reviewing, revising, redeveloping or retiring an existing syllabus for a senior subject.
Syllabus redevelopment	The process undertaken to develop a new syllabus when the syllabus review report indicates that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the foundational principles and purposes of the existing syllabus require reconsideration, or• there have been shifts in the subject such that the existing syllabus no longer reflects the subject.
Syllabus retirement	The process undertaken to make a syllabus unavailable for implementation when the syllabus review report makes this recommendation.

Syllabus review	The process undertaken to formally examine a syllabus according to the parameters set out in the syllabus review brief.
Syllabus revision	<p>The process undertaken to make changes to a syllabus when the syllabus review report recommends changes that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beyond the scope of a syllabus amendment • not self-evident and require broader expert consultation.

Legislation

- [Section 9](#) of the *Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014*
- [Section 39, 40, 41](#), and *Public Sector Act 2022*

Authorisations

- The senior syllabus development, revision and purchase functions are performed by the QCAA in accordance with section 9 of the *Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014*.

Related policies

- [Records management policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public service](#)

Contact

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Review date

The Syllabus development and management policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required. Next review date: 17 February 2028.

Version history

Version #	Date	Comments	Content Manager #
1.0	17/02/2025	New policy	25/01559



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1. [OECD. 2019. *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use*. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation. Retrieved from OECD, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2019/12/better-criteria-for-better-evaluation_f7a307eb.html]