

Queensland response to the draft Years 5–10 Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business

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Queensland Studies Authority

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Key strengths, issues and concerns	2
2.1 Strengths	2
2.2 Issues and concerns	2
3. Section-by-section analysis	4
3.1 Rationale and aims	4
Strengths.....	4
Issues and concerns.....	5
3.2 Organisation.....	6
3.3 Student diversity, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities	6
3.4 Curriculum content.....	7
Strengths.....	7
Issues and concerns.....	7

1. Introduction

The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), in partnership with Education Queensland (EQ), Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ), appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft *Years 5–10 Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business*. Queensland supports the development of an Australian Curriculum that will provide consistent and explicit curriculum expectations across the nation.

This response provides a summary of the collated Queensland feedback from:

- representative curriculum and learning area committees of the QSA
- representatives of the Business Educator Association of Queensland (BEAQ)
- representatives of the Queensland Economics Teachers Association (QETA)
- representatives from the University of Queensland and Queensland University of Technology
- representatives of the three school sectors, representing and advocating for 1400 EQ schools, 296 Catholic schools and 188 Independent schools.

Queensland's consultation identified strengths, issues and concerns for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) consideration when redrafting the *Years 5–10 Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business*.

The Queensland response is organised in the following way:

- key strengths of the draft curriculum and broad issues and concerns, with the suggested way forward
- specific feedback on each section of the draft curriculum, with subject-specific issues and concerns and the suggested way forward.

2. Key strengths, issues and concerns

2.1 Strengths

Consultation participants identified the following key strengths.

- Participants viewed positively the inclusion of Business in the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business curriculum.
- The Economics and Business learning area has the potential for students to engage in investigations and real life scenarios.
- The two strands of Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding and Economics and Business Skills provide a basic structure consistent with other Australian Curriculum subjects.
- The elaborations provide a range of possibilities and ideas for teachers.
- The aims and organising ideas support students in learning to consider multiple points of view, e.g. consideration of both the consumer and business operator perspectives.
- The general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are clearly evident and appropriately represented.

2.2 Issues and concerns

Consultation participants raised the following key issues and concerns.

- There are significant inconsistencies across the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area in relation to:
 - terminology and language use, including syntax, e.g. questioning(s) and interpreting(ation)
 - construct of the curriculum, i.e. organising ideas, inquiry etc.
 - timing of the progression from local to regional, to national and to a global focus P–10
 - incorporating all content descriptors in achievement standards
 - overlap of content between Work and Work futures overarching idea and the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Years 9–10 course.
- The organisation of the curriculum is unclear due to its numerous elements, i.e. inquiry, organising ideas, enterprising behaviours and capabilities.
- No inquiry framework has been provided, however inquiry questions have been used to frame the curriculum content. This is confusing.
- The skills strand seems repetitive and the increase in cognitive demand from one band to the next is uneven — in some instances, it is a repeat of the statement.
- There was general concern that this draft is too ambitious in terms of the amount of content that can be taught at each year level, i.e. approximately 20 hours per year level. Teachers consistently used the term “expecting too much” and argued that it would be better for the curriculum to link to the life skills of practical applications in Business and to focus on the theoretical understandings in a senior curriculum.

- Primary teachers report significant challenges in understanding the theoretical nature of the Economics Knowledge and understanding and they are especially challenged by a fourth inquiry approach within the Humanities and Social Science learning area.
- Non-specialist teachers (in particular primary teachers) will find that the degree of specialised technical knowledge and skills required is an area of concern, and will require significant professional development.
- The inclusion and development of Enterprising behaviours and capabilities appears to be an additional layer to the four overarching ideas and will be difficult to gather evidence of, in student work. It is not identified in the shape paper as an organising idea, however appears as an additional construct in the curriculum content. It is listed as a skill in the Year Level descriptions but is described as knowledge and understanding in the organisation.
- The content descriptions and elaborations are generally too demanding for the year levels at which they are pitched — up to two years above what is age appropriate. This is exacerbated by the use of discipline-specific language in the content descriptions and elaborations, e.g. “scarcity of resources” and “cost-benefit analysis”. It suggests a scope and sequence that is pitched at a level beyond what is reasonable to expect of a typical student at that age.
- There is assumed knowledge prior to Year 5. It is important this it is clarified and indicated where in the curriculum this knowledge and understanding will be developed.
- While there are a range of elaborations provided, the draft curriculum offers a “pedestrian” view of Economics and Business that may not appeal to junior secondary students.
- There is a focus on Economics and limited attention to Business in the Knowledge and Understanding strand. This is particularly evident in Years 8–10.
- The curriculum will not develop a sufficient practical approach to financial and marketing content to provide a foundation for business studies in senior schooling.
- Economics and Business is elective in Years 9 and 10. The units, content descriptions and elaborations for Years 9 and 10 are theoretical and focussed on economics knowledge. This will limit the current practice of innovative Economics and Business teachers where there is a balance between the two disciplines.
- In Queensland, when Economics and Business is studied as an elective in Years 9 and 10, it is often split into the two disciplines and more hours are allocated than the indicative 20 hours per year used by the writers for both. The content descriptions need to be broader so that schools may further develop content, topics and units of study that match a course of study. Schools need to be provided with flexibility to develop topics, units and contexts for learning that suit their individual needs.
- It is noted that the glossary is still in development.

Ways forward

- Strengthen consistency across subjects within the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area. Consider the development of skills using the same or similar sub-strands as Civics and Citizenship — while it is recognised that some skills have a discipline-specific focus, there is little justification for a unique framework for these skills especially in Years 5 to 8.
- Develop an inquiry framework that is consistent with the other subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area.

- Map the Work and Work futures overarching idea and the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Years 9–10 course and revise to reduce duplication.
- Strengthen alignment throughout the curriculum, from the rationale and aims to the organisation of the content descriptions and achievement standards.
- Review the rationale, aims and curriculum content to ensure appropriate balance and focus of Economics and Business.
- Clearly align the Knowledge and understanding described for each year level to the four overarching ideas.
- Improve the content descriptions and elaborations for Years 9 and 10 so that schools can offer two elective subjects in each of Economics and Business. Schools need to be provided with flexibility to develop topics, unit and contexts for learning that suit their individual needs.
- Clarify the required learning F-4 and indicate where this might be taught. This would need to be realistic as the curriculum for these years is already very full.
- Further refine the content descriptions and elaborations to:
 - minimise the use of technical language and jargon
 - ensure that they are broad enough to avoid narrowing the opportunities for teachers to develop engaging and innovative programs in Economics and Business
 - re-evaluate the pitch, particularly in the lower primary years
 - review so that there is a more realistic expectation about what can be taught in the nominated time suggested, especially for Years 5–8.
- Develop a glossary
- Use the same conventions for numbering the content descriptions as has been used for other learning areas to facilitate referencing the descriptions when planning for teaching and learning.
- Use diagrams to explain various relationships, e.g. how all the components (organising ideas, enterprising behaviours and capabilities, inquiry questions, unit titles) come together.

3. Section-by-section analysis

3.1 Rationale and aims

Strengths

Consultation participants identified the following strengths in the rationale and aims.

- The rationale reflects the intent of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) and generally meets expectations for the learning area.
- The rationale and aims clearly identify the importance of Economics and Business and explain the importance of the learning area in contemporary Australian society.
- References to the cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities are clear.
- The rationale clearly emphasises the links to “adult life”.
- Consumer and financial literacy is prominent in the aims.

Issues and concerns

Consultation participants identified the following issues and concerns about the rationale and aims.

- As seen in previous drafts, the rationale continues to mention an “integrated approach” to the development of students’ economic and business literacy. This term needs further explanation. It is unclear whether the “integrated approach” refers to the teaching of Economics and Business, or whether an “integrated approach” refers to the development of the curriculum for the four overarching ideas.
- The rationale identifies four organising ideas. Enterprising behaviours and capabilities are not listed as an organising idea in the shape paper, yet it is specifically referenced in the rationale and aims in the draft curriculum.
- Feedback stated that the rationale and aims are focused on Economics. Business is not clearly articulated or described.
- The aims:
 - need to clearly align to the four overarching ideas. These are not clearly represented.
 - do not clearly describe both knowledge and understanding. Some aims describe only understanding.
 - do not address “developing an understanding of business environments” or “work and work futures” (shape paper, p. 9)
 - are presented differently from the other subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area, i.e. the first aim in other subjects, e.g. History, is about dispositions and attitudes that are to be developed as a result of this study, including ethical thinking and social justice (to link with the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities)
 - emphasise curriculum content and favour economics content over business content.

Ways forward

- Review the rationale to focus on the purpose of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business.
- Review the rationale and aims to ensure appropriate balance and focus of Economics and Business. Consider including a statement that Business learning is based on the practical application of Economic and Business theory and principles.
- Restructure the rationale using the four organising ideas. Use Enterprising Behaviours and Capabilities as an overall construct, i.e. the learning from the four organising ideas will develop these behaviours and capabilities.
- Clarify what is meant by “integrated approach”.
- Continue to refine the aims to be clear, succinct and without repetition.
- Revisit the aims in the shape paper as they better describe this learning area.
- Include an Aim about active participation in business to complement the active participation Aim in the Geography and Civics and Citizenship curriculum.
- Strengthen alignment throughout the curriculum, from the rationale and aims to the organisation of the content descriptions and achievement standards.

3.2 Organisation

Consultation participants raised the following points about the Economics and Business learning area organisation and curriculum across Years 5–10.

- Feedback was broadly supportive of the organising ideas.
- Each of the four organising ideas is explained on pp. 7 and 8. The section, Enterprising behaviours and capabilities, is then included after the organising ideas. This is confusing because the rationale and shape paper state that there are only four overarching ideas.
- Enterprising behaviours and capabilities is the only section where global understandings are made explicit. This link could be made in other organising ideas such as resource allocation and making choices. Students should be encouraged to understand that every decision has a cost involved and they should consider the opportunity cost, as well as alternative ways resources could be used. The word “most effectively” needs to be defined as “most efficiently”.
- The Economics and Business skills (identified on p. 8) are limited in the detail in which they are described and do not give a clear indication of the skills or their developmental sequence throughout the document. The headings that are used throughout the listing of content descriptors and elaborations for each year level (enterprising behaviours and capabilities, economics and business questions and research, reasoning, interpretation and analysis, application, decision-making, reflection and communication) could be included on p. 8 to make the link more explicit.
- There is assumed knowledge prior to Year 5, it is important that this is clarified and it is indicated where in the curriculum this knowledge and understanding will be developed. It cannot be assumed that a primary teacher would know that they have to do this if it is not part of the whole curriculum.
- The Year 5 curriculum is pitched at a high level which many students may find difficult.

Ways forward

- Strengthen alignment throughout the curriculum, from the rationale and aims to the organisation of the content descriptions and achievement standards.
- Revise Enterprising behaviours and capabilities as an overall construct to be used for the other organising ideas rather than a separate heading.
- Identify the required learning in the P–4 and the learning area in which it is described. Alternatively, do not assume that this is prior knowledge and revise what is required at Year 5.

3.3 Student diversity, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities

Consultation participants raised the following points about student diversity, the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

- The descriptions of how student diversity, the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities apply to the Economics and Business curriculum were all generally supported in Queensland's feedback.
- The importance of the Information and communication technology (ICT) capability within this learning area needs to be further emphasised through the use of specific Economics and Business examples.

- Participants gave positive feedback on the specific Economics and Business examples provided for the Literacy and Numeracy capabilities.
- Personal and social capability, Ethical understanding and Intercultural understanding need to be further refined, using plain language.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia need more specific authentic examples.
- Intercultural understanding could also highlight procedures and factors that impact when working with other countries to develop business opportunities and to address economic challenges.

3.4 Curriculum content

Strengths

Consultation participants identified the following strengths in the curriculum content.

- It is clear that the content descriptions are intended to be of a high standard.
- It is possible to see some alignment with other learning areas.

Issues and concerns

Consultation participants identified the following issues and concerns about the curriculum content.

- Primary teachers are very concerned about the separate inquiry approaches used in the four subjects within the Humanities and Social Science learning area. The requirement to teach students not only different knowledge and understanding but also different inquiry approaches within each of the four subjects creates an unnecessary division especially for learning at this level. This approach to curriculum development does not support primary teachers to develop integrated programs.
- Key inquiry questions are described for each year level (e.g. p. 17). The key inquiry questions need to clearly align with the four overarching ideas. Further guidance as to how the inquiry questions should be used in teaching and learning needs to be provided.
- A title for each year level curriculum is provided, e.g. Year 5 Choice and Decisions (p. 17). This appears to be an unnecessary additional layer to the curriculum construct.
- The use of “threads” within strands to demonstrate continuity across F–10 is inconsistent with no “threads” for Knowledge and understanding and six “threads” for Skills. This is further confused by using Questions and Research following Enterprising Behaviours and Capabilities.

Knowledge and understanding

Consultation participants identified the following issues and concerns about the Knowledge and understanding.

- There is a focus on Economics and limited attention to Business in the Knowledge and understanding strand. This is particularly evident in Years 8–10, i.e. How do we improve our standard of living? How is our economy performing?
- The practical application and demonstration of concepts and skills are critically important, particularly in Business. These are not well represented in the Knowledge and understanding.

- The content does not support a progression of learning appropriate to student cognitive development across the years of schooling. This is particularly evident in the lack of complexity in the concepts for Years 8–10.
- Consideration needs to be given to the overlap between the Work and Work futures overarching idea and the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Years 9–10 course.
- While the elaborations provide a range of possibilities and ideas for teachers, there is concern that some suggest a higher level of expectation than the content descriptions require and that this could mislead non-specialist teachers particularly at lower year levels. For example, Year 5 “exploring the ways businesses interact or work with businesses in other regions, such as the Asia region to meet needs and wants of consumers, for example the provision of a wider variety of clothing or technological goods” and Year 6 “investigating the continuous nature of trade relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities”. These concepts are not encountered in other learning areas until Years 9–10.
- While there is a range of elaborations provided, the draft curriculum offers a “pedestrian” view of Economics and Business that may not appeal to junior secondary students.
- The curriculum will not develop a sufficient financial knowledge base to provide a foundation for the current Queensland senior syllabuses of Business Communication and Technologies, Business Management, Accounting and certificate based qualifications, e.g. Certificate II in Business, following on from Year 10.
- Some content descriptions are too prescriptive in terms of what is described in the Year Level description and unit title (particularly Years 9 and 10). This will limit the current practice of innovative Economics and Business teachers.
- The Economics and Business elaborations need to provide clear links to relevant contexts in other learning areas such as Mathematics and other Humanities and Social Science subjects.
- The draft Economics and Business curriculum demands a significant level of teacher expertise, such that non-specialist teachers will require significant support to interpret the curriculum document and to develop appropriate learning opportunities for their students.
- The rationale mentions a focus on global economies (in addition to the Australian economies). It would be helpful if the content descriptors and elaborations gave more global and Asian examples to support teachers (particularly non-specialists in this learning area) to identify opportunities to explore these areas effectively.

Ways forward

- Provide further guidance about how the inquiry questions should be used in teaching and learning.
- Further refine the content descriptions to:
 - minimise the use of technical language and jargon
 - ensure that they are broad enough to avoid narrowing the opportunities for teachers to develop engaging and innovative teaching and learning programs in Economics and Business
 - provide a balance of economics and business understandings and skills
 - re-evaluate the pitch to align with student cognitive developmental levels
 - increase the use of practical applications.
- Revise the content descriptions and elaborations to promote student interest especially in Years 5–8. In Years 9 and 10, provide flexibility so that an accelerated curriculum can be developed that allows students who have chosen to continue their study of Economics and Business, to learn high level concepts and skills.
- Include in Knowledge and understanding a strong focus on business including:
 - the way in which technology has transformed the business environment
 - leadership, teamwork and interpersonal skills required to meet the needs of dynamic work environments
 - business planning, marketing, operations, human resources
 - record keeping, simple financial records and control procedures for specific audiences and purposes
 - analysis of financial reports for decision-making purposes using accounting principles such as accounting equation, methods, controls, double entry
 - personal financial literacy skills, e.g. budgeting
 - types of business activities and business structures — public private, partnerships, sole traders.
- Provide a progressively expanded scope — in the study of economic and business development — from local through regional to global as well as from smaller scale through to large scale operations. This should align to the scales in other Humanities and social sciences subjects.
- Revise elaborations to ensure they contain new information (e.g. specific examples, useful contexts, strategies for thinking that are related to those used in industry) rather than re-wording phrases used in the content descriptions or achievement standards.
- Ensure the curriculum in Years 9–10 provides flexibility for schools to develop engaging elective study through topics, units and contexts for learning that suit different contexts.

Skills

Consultation participants identified the following issues and concerns about the Skills strand.

- There is no clear alignment between the Economics and Business Skills and the skills for History, Geography and Civics and Citizenship. This creates an unhelpful curriculum construct that does not support teachers, especially primary school teachers, to develop an integrated approach or consolidate students' learning across the Humanities and Social Science learning area.
- The focus provided for each Economics and Business Skill is not translated across Years 5–10. The level of cognition required for the different year levels changes across Years 5–10.
- The Economics and Business Skills strand is repetitive and does not increase in cognitive demand from one band to the next — in some instances the statement is repeated.

Ways forward

- Review the Knowledge and understanding and Skills to clearly identify and clarify how these are developed across Years 5–10.
- Use a single set of skills within the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area and only differentiate skills if the skill is specifically identified in the curriculum for the particular subject.
- Include skills that are specific to Economics and Business to add rigour and curriculum value.

Achievement standards

Consultation participants identified the following points about the achievement standards.

- Some achievement standards do not accurately represent the content descriptions, e.g. Year 5 Economic and Business Skills — Application description: students are asked to *Apply economic and business concepts ...*, however this is not reflected in the Year 5 achievement standard.
- In the organisation section, the description of the achievement standards has a reference to F–Year 10 (rather than Years 5–10). While there is an expectation that Economics and Business ideas will be looked at in the earlier years, they will only be reported on from Year 5. It may avoid confusion here to only reference achievement standards from Year 5 (rather than F).

Ways forward

- Continue to refine the achievement standards to ensure that they describe the typical extent of knowledge, depth of understanding, and sophistication of skills at the end of each band of content descriptions.
- Review the achievement standards to ensure they:
 - accurately reflect the curriculum content
 - identify the particular level of expectation at each particular band level
 - provide an appropriate developmental sequence or progression
 - remove normative language such as “appropriate” (and from the content descriptions)
 - include the use of practical situations and applications
 - incorporate enterprise.

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