

# Queensland response to the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business

---

October 2012



# Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Key strengths and issues and concerns .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1. Key strengths .....	2
2.2. Key issues and concerns .....	2
<b>3. Section-by-section analysis .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1. Rationale.....	3
3.2. Aims.....	4
3.3. Scope of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business.....	5
3.4. The nature of Economics and Business.....	6
3.5. How is the Economics and Business curriculum organised? .....	7
3.6. Economics and Business F–12.....	8
3.7. Diversity of learners .....	10
3.8. General capabilities .....	10
3.9. Cross-curriculum priorities .....	10
3.10. Conclusion .....	11
3.11. Key terms and concepts .....	11



# 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 Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business* (the draft Shape paper). Queensland supports the development of an Australian Curriculum that will provide consistent and explicit curriculum expectations across the nation.

This paper is a summary of the collated Queensland feedback submitted from:

- representative curriculum and learning area committees of the QSA
- Queensland teachers from across the Economics and Business learning area
- representatives of the three school sectors, representing and advocating for 1400 EQ schools, 292 Catholic schools and 188 Independent schools.

Queensland's consultation identified strengths and a range of issues and concerns for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) consideration when redrafting the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business*.

The Queensland response is organised in the following way:

- key strengths of the draft Shape paper, and broad issues and concerns
- specific feedback on each section of the draft Shape paper with suggested ways forward and examples.

## 2. Key strengths and issues and concerns

### 2.1. Key strengths

Participants in the Queensland consultation were generally supportive of the positions taken in the draft Shape paper. They identified the following strengths:

- Overall, the draft Shape paper provides an appropriate framework for developing an Australian Curriculum in Economics and Business.
- The organisation of the curriculum into two strands — Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding, and Economics and Business Skills — is appropriate, and most of the essential elements to be developed as curriculum content are identified.
- The descriptions across Foundation (F) to Year 12 provided in the Economics and Business: F–12 section should assist in the development of appropriate content that builds students' knowledge, understandings and skills from Years 5 to 8, with some guidance for Years 9 and 10 and senior secondary.

### 2.2. Key issues and concerns

Consultation participants raised the following key issues and concerns in consultations.

- The amount of content to be covered across Years 5–8, as described in each phase, is extensive. Serious consideration must be given to reviewing and reducing the amount of content so that realistic expectations are set for primary generalist teachers and how they will develop and manage effective learning experiences.
- Throughout the draft Shape paper, a more secondary schooling approach is used. This needs to be reviewed to ensure that the curriculum developed focuses on knowledge, understandings and skills that are appropriate for the phase of schooling.
- The lack of clarity about the interrelated and integrated nature of Economics and Business is concerning. This should be clearly aligned and consistent throughout the draft Shape paper.
- Alignment between the rationale, aims, key ideas and phases of schooling statements is lacking.
- The skill of “evaluating”, and the processes of collaborative problem solving and decision making, needs to be incorporated into the curriculum content.
- While the content overview will assist in developing appropriate content for Years 5–8, the Years 9 and 10 content outlines need to be reviewed to ensure a consistent approach to curriculum development.
- When referring to content or ideas, specific Economics and Business examples that show the interrelated nature of Economics and Business should be provided.
- All subjects within the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area would benefit from a common structure and greater consistency in the way subject-specific inquiry processes are described.
- Explicit references to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities throughout the content overview might ensure that they are appropriately and meaningfully integrated across the Economics and Business curriculum.

## 3. Section-by-section analysis

The following provides a section-by-section analysis of the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business*. It particularly focuses on the clarity, coherence, appropriateness and structure of the draft Shape paper.

### 3.1. Rationale

#### *Strengths*

Consultation participants identified the following strengths in consultations about the rationale.

- The inclusion of Goal 2 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) is supported.
- References to the cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities are clear.

#### *Issues and concerns*

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about the rationale.

- Point 1:
  - indicates that research supports an interrelated approach that places Economics as the underpinning discipline that is applied across Business topics. This ignores other research and models that present alternative viewpoints where not all Business concepts and sub-disciplines are underpinned by Economics
  - uses a number of different terms to describe the construct of the Economics and Business curriculum, e.g. “interrelated”, “integrated”, “underpinning discipline”. These terms are contradictory and are inconsistently applied throughout the draft Shape paper. Examples of where inconsistencies can be found in the draft Shape paper include Points 1, 16, 22, 31 and 78
  - misinterprets the research by Dulleck and Tang (2009) and Harkness (2009). The research discusses a pedagogical framework for use in the teaching of introductory Economics in a Business degree. This does not necessarily translate to an F–12 curriculum shape paper, or discuss an interrelated approach to Economics and Business thinking and reasoning.
- Point 2:
  - highlights research regarding the discipline of Economics. No similar research is provided in Point 3, which introduces Business
  - uses a definition of Economics that needs to mention that Economics involves decision making about the use of resources. The first two sentences of Point 2 could be removed
  - uses research that is dated. A more contemporary definition of Economics would be appropriate.
- Point 3 provides a definition of Business activity that is difficult to understand and needs rewording.

- Point 6 includes some Economics concepts but does not include any Business concepts.
- Point 8 has a mismatch between the National Consumer and Financial Literacy Framework, which starts in Foundation, and this draft Shape paper, which indicates that the formal curriculum starts in Year 5. When teachers are required to plan from the Australian Curriculum, it cannot be expected that students have been given the opportunity to develop the knowledge, understandings and skills outlined in the framework prior to their formal inclusion in the Australian Curriculum. If valued, the knowledge, understandings and skills outlined in the framework must be stated in the curriculum.
- Point 11 suggests that contemporary economic and business practices have been significantly impacted by “longstanding traditions of trade and exchange”. Consider whether this is a historical reference or a social justice reference.
- The discipline of Accounting is not referenced explicitly in the rationale. Accounting as a senior subject is referred to in Point 44. Reference to the discipline of Accounting should be incorporated in Point 8.

#### **Ways forward**

- Review the rationale to focus on the purpose of the *Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business*.
- Rewrite specific points in the rationale based on the suggestions provided above.

## **3.2. Aims**

### **Strengths**

Consultation participants identified the following strengths in consultations about the aims.

The aims:

- provide a clear focus on active participation and learning
- make clear reference to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

### **Issues and concerns**

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about the aims.

- As a general design consideration, the aims should be restructured to better reflect the structure of the proposed curriculum — Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding, and Economics and Business Skills.
- The aims in this draft Shape paper do not clearly align with the aims in other social sciences. This may present problems for teachers using curriculum from across the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area, especially in Years 5–7.
- The aims in the draft Shape paper need to be more global (e.g. as are provided in the Geography curriculum) so that they are relevant over a number of years.
- Economics knowledge is overemphasised at the expense of Business knowledge.
- Point 13 refers to engagement with the “economy locally, nationally, regionally and globally”. The contextual reference should be consistent throughout the document and “economy” should be broadened to include business.



- Point 14:
  - makes the *Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business* appear to be a study of Economics and Business rather than an active and engaging Economics and Business curriculum. Consider a stronger emphasis on students designing, developing and implementing their own enterprising ventures rather than studying market systems and financial literacies.
  - Point 14 (I) should include the word “scarce” before the word “resources” in the phrase “allocation of resources” to reflect the economic understanding of resources as being scarce.
  - Point 14 (II) seems to fit more with Civics and Citizenship than a study of Business. If it were to be included, the contribution of unpaid and voluntary work should be included. Reference to the “economy” should be expanded to “economic decision making and business community”.
  - Point 14 (VI) should refer to “sustainable and equitable Australian and global economies”. The role of ethical decision making should be highlighted.

#### Ways forward

- Review and redraft the aims to better reflect the structure of the proposed curriculum structure — Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding, and Economics and Business Skills.
- Consider the suggestions listed above when redrafting the aims to clarify the intent of the curriculum and to elaborate on the content of the rationale.

### 3.3. Scope of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business

#### Strengths

Consultation participants identified the following strength in consultations about the Scope of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business section.

- Reference to previous definitions of this curriculum area is supported as it builds on current understandings.

#### Issues and concerns

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about the Scope of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business section.

- Point 15 emphasises values that are not universally shared, for example economic growth does not always automatically enhance living standards. This course should focus on the skills and capabilities necessary to make decisions rather than simply understanding the effects of these decisions. Additionally, Economics is defined but Business is not.
- Point 16:
  - does not reference the roles of government and the legal system, which are vital to understand when studying Economics and Business. These roles should also be referenced in the key ideas
  - discusses the “interrelated nature of Economics and Business through four overarching and interconnected key ideas”. This contradicts Point 1, which states

that “Economics [ ... ] is seen as the underpinning discipline, and Business, where the economic concepts apply across a range of Business contexts”.

- Point 17:
  - uses “world view” which is inconsistent with Point 13 (“local, national, regional and global”)
  - under Resource allocation and making choices, refers to “our society’s”, which is unclear. A distinction should be made as to whether this refers to Australian society or Australia’s interaction with other societies. The final sentence should be reworded to state “While different economic systems operate within Australia, the market system is used to make these choices. As a result of the forces of demand and supply, resources are allocated based on the action of consumers, producers and the government.”
  - appears to focus the study of Work and business environments on preparing students for a future as an employee rather than highlighting other possible futures, including owning a business and/or management or leadership in business
  - under Enterprising behaviours and capabilities, needs to make clear the distinction between the behaviours and capabilities
  - names “Enterprising behaviours and capabilities” as a key idea. Consider renaming this key idea “Enterprising ventures and capabilities”, which emphasises students developing, implementing and analysing their own business practices (particularly in the early year levels)
  - uses a description for Work and Business environments that is specific to the content. This prescription will make evidencing the Economics and Business Skills difficult (Point 25).

#### **Ways forward**

- Review and redraft the key ideas in Point 17.
- Ensure alignment between the rationale, aims and scope.

## **3.4. The nature of Economics and Business**

### ***Strengths***

Consultation participants identified the following strength in consultations about The nature of Economics and Business section.

- The curriculum structure, based on the cognitive, behavioural and affective domains, is supported, as are the two organisational strands of Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding, and Economics and Business Skills.

### ***Issues and concerns***

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about The nature of Economics and Business section.

- Point 18:
  - states that “there are opportunities to connect and build on related content in History, Geography, and Civics and Citizenship”. However, no clear alignment is evident between this document and the curriculum for these subjects. It is difficult to see how this could facilitate an integrated approach if this subject is to be a part of the Humanities and Social Science learning area.

- provides examples for the Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, and Technologies learning areas. Specific examples for History, Geography and Civics and Citizenship need to be provided.
- Point 19 does not allow for the idea of self-employment and mentoring in the workplace. It limits engagement with business and other industries to a vocational focus (preparing for the world of work) rather than for gaining an understanding of how businesses operate.
- Point 20:
  - needs to include “practise” as well as “explore”. The addition of “application of the theory into practice” to the end of the sentence would assist with clarity
  - uses an inquiry approach (in Appendix 1) that is not consistent with the other Humanities and Social Science learning area disciplines. These inquiry approaches need to align
  - uses an inquiry approach to investigating business and economic issues, which is appropriate. However, the limited time allocation (as well as the range of topics of study) will not allow this approach to be successful. The proposed inquiry model focuses the study of Economics and Business on a theoretical study of decisions and their impacts rather than the development of skills and dispositions of decision makers and entrepreneurs.

#### **Ways forward**

- Review and redraft this section to include the suggestions listed above. In particular:
  - review the structure of Economics and Business Skills and the relationships to other Humanities and Social Sciences subjects
  - provide a consistent inquiry approach across the Humanities and Social Science learning area.

### **3.5. How is the Economics and Business curriculum organised?**

#### **Strengths**

Consultation participants identified the following strength in consultations about how the Economics and Business curriculum is organised.

- The knowledge and understandings provided are clear and concise.

#### **Issues and concerns**

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about how the Economics and Business curriculum is organised.

- No overarching framework of skills for the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area is provided. This is essential work for ACARA to assist in the implementation of the four subjects that comprise the learning area.
- Where possible, common links, subheadings and wording between the skills of History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business should be promoted.
- Most of the identified *Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business* concepts are translated from senior secondary syllabuses and are unfamiliar to primary teachers or students. Content represented would require significant time for delivery, with most content in primary schools likely to be delivered through integrated units. Consider improving content alignment with terminology.

- Point 23 states that “the four key ideas ... are not proportional or hierarchical”. However, in Point 24, there is a clear imbalance of knowledge and understanding.
- Point 24:
  - does not make clear how Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding aligns with the four key ideas. The knowledge and understanding described for each of the four key ideas is unevenly balanced. For example, 24 (e) is the only knowledge and understanding described for the Consumer and financial literacy key idea
  - does not recognise the legal implications of business.
- Point 25:
  - should not just refer to the economy in the stem, and “in their economy” could be removed
  - has a confusing overlap between (a) and (c) as both refer to interpretation. Reasoning and interpretation (including forecasting and predicting) seems more suited for (c)
  - (b) describes inquiry and research in a way that doesn’t clearly align to Appendix 1. The combination of inquiry and research is inappropriate as one is a subset of the other. All Humanities and Social Sciences skills are based on inquiry
  - (d) uses “collaborative” in its subheading. Decision making should be individual as well as collaborative, so using “collaborative” limits this skill. No consideration or discussion is given to the justification or evaluation of the decision. Consider how these skills will be evidenced in student work
  - (e) uses “response” in the subheading. This is unnecessary as communication and reflection are both responses.

#### **Ways forward**

- Review and redraft this section to include the suggestions listed above. In particular:
  - clarify the alignment of the aims, key ideas, knowledge and understanding, and skills
  - align the description of inquiry in Appendix 1 and the Economics and Business Skills
  - develop an overarching framework of skills for the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area.

## **3.6. Economics and Business F–12**

### ***Strengths***

Consultation participants identified the following strength in consultations about the Economics and Business F–12 section.

- The outline of the scope and parameters in Points 25 to 29 is clear and sets the scene clearly for curriculum writers. This section should be replicated in the curriculum to assist schools in planning.

### ***Issues and concerns***

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about the Economics and Business F–12 section.

- The amount of content to be covered for Years 5–8, as described in each phase, is extensive. The amount of content to be learnt and understood means that students will not have time to meaningfully engage in learning opportunities. Students will not have

time to deeply explore the knowledge and understandings and to be involved in engaging inquiry processes. The amount of content described must be reviewed and significantly reduced.

- The Shape paper needs to make clear the learning that has occurred and the understandings that have been developed through other learning areas in F–4 to guide the curriculum writers developing the curriculum from Year 5.
- Point 29 needs to name, align or map the curriculum from F–4 to other learning areas. A significant amount of knowledge and understanding is assumed in this phase of learning.
- Years 5 to 6:
  - Point 31 refers to “underpinning economic and business key ideas”. This is inconsistent with Points 1 and 78. The reference to “basic economic and business concepts” is not defined.
  - Point 32 expects a significant amount of prior knowledge and understanding.
- Years 7 to 8:
  - Point 33
    - should be amended to “During these years, students need to be provided opportunities for them to see themselves as active members in ... ” Further on, it should read “Students at this phase of learning are beginning to work with more abstract concepts ... ”
    - needs to clarify what is a “more abstract” and “more complex” explanation.
- Years 9 to 10:
  - The curriculum construct in this phase of learning has changed significantly. Topics of study are now described. Topics, units and contexts for learning should be a school-based decision. The Shape paper should only describe the content and learning.
  - In Point 35, guidance is given that students in Years 7–8 will be investigating at a local, national, regional and global level. Yet, in Point 37, the focus for Years 9 and 10 is on having a regional and global perspective. This is a significant inconsistency between the learning of these age groups in particular.
  - Point 37 indicates that the curriculum will increasingly have a regional and global perspective. Yet, the topics suggested for Years 9 and 10 in Point 41 appear to have a limited focus and bias towards personal consumer finance. The topics are too narrow and do not reflect regional and global issues.
  - Point 38 discusses using an “integrated manner” to study a contemporary issue or event. This “integrated manner” should be the basis of all learning from Years 5–10, not only for Years 9 and 10.
  - Point 39 refers to the inquiry model. This approach should be applied in Years 5–10, not simply in Years 9 and 10.
  - Point 41
    - does not clearly align knowledge and understanding to the key ideas.
    - is not necessary in a Shape paper.

- Senior secondary:
  - Point 44 provides the first reference in the draft Shape paper to Accounting as a discipline. Accounting should be referenced in the rationale and in the Consumer and financial literacy key idea.
  - Point 46 uses a restrictive definition of a Business course. The description needs to reference management.

#### Ways forward

- Review the content described in each phase of schooling to significantly reduce the amount to be covered.
- Describe the links between the Economics and Business learning area and other learning areas, especially the Humanities and Social Sciences subjects, for each phase of schooling.
- Review the curriculum construct described in Years 9 and 10.

## 3.7. Diversity of learners

### Issues and concerns

Consultation participants raised the following issue in consultations about the Diversity of learners section.

- In March 2012, ACARA released the *Curriculum Design Paper (Version 3)*, which is the endorsed basis for curriculum design. This paper includes design considerations for inclusivity. It is of significant concern that the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business* appears to reference a specific learning framework (Universal Design for Learning) that is not endorsed within the *Curriculum Design Paper*. It is strongly recommended that Point 54 reference the *Curriculum Design Paper* only.

#### Way forward

- Review Point 54 as indicated above.

## 3.8. General capabilities

### Issues and concerns

Consultation participants raised the following issue in consultations about the general capabilities.

- Point 59 provides examples that refer primarily to Business and financial literacy aspects. Some of these ideas (e.g. profit and loss) do not appear in the knowledge and understanding or key ideas.

## 3.9. Cross-curriculum priorities

### Issues and concerns

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about the cross-curriculum priorities.

- Care will be required to balance the cross-curriculum priorities and subject-specific curriculum demands within the time allocated.

- Point 72 references Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures mainly from a historical and social justice perspective. This creates a danger that the teaching and learning response will be tokenistic.
- Point 75:
  - is concerning over the level of difficulty that it describes
  - states that “students will consider current trade relationships ... ” As trade is not a strong feature of the curriculum, it is difficult to see how consideration of current trade relationships will occur.

## 3.10. Conclusion

### *Issues and concerns*

Consultation participants raised the following issue in consultations about the conclusion.

- The conclusion does not align with the rationale.

## 3.11. Key terms and concepts

### *Strengths*

Consultation participants identified the following strength in consultations about the key terms and concepts.

- The inclusion of definitions of the key terms and concepts is supported and is seen as a valuable part of the draft Shape paper.

### *Issues and concerns*

Consultation participants raised the following issues and concerns in consultations about the key terms and concepts.

- Definitions of the key terms and concepts could be expanded to develop shared understandings and to inform the glossary in the *Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business*.
- The key terms have a narrow, economic focus, and a number of key Business terms are missing.
- Terms such as “business context”, “underpinning” and “interrelated” need to be defined to improve clarity.
- Consultation participants have concerns regarding some of the definitions provided:
  - Business activity is not the aggregate economic activities of an organisation — it is only a subset of business activity.
  - The definition of “consumer” does not reflect the notion of personal consumer choices as well as those made on behalf of others.
  - In the definition for “innovation”, “better and more effective” needs defining, while “accepted by governments and society” is debatable.
  - The definition of “living standards” is narrow. Buying power, rather than income, is a more accurate reflection of living standards. Furthermore, this definition does not reflect the benefit from non-economic factors, e.g. private labour to living standards.

- The definition of “resource allocation” needs to reference communal good.
- The definition of “sustainability” needs to add “for future generations”.
- The definition of “wellbeing” needs to include examples of contexts.





---

## **Queensland Studies Authority**

154 Melbourne Street, South Brisbane

PO Box 307 Spring Hill

QLD 4004 Australia

**T** +61 7 3864 0299

**F** +61 7 3221 2553

**[www.qsa.qld.edu.au](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au)**

---