Queensland response to the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages*

April 2011

Contents

Introduction

Queensland supports the development of an Australian Curriculum in languages that will provide consistent and explicit curriculum expectations across the nation. The following feedback has been prepared by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), in partnership with Education Queensland (EQ), Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ), on the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* (the draft shape paper). It includes a summary of the collated feedback from:

- representative committees of the QSA

- district and state review panellists for Languages

- teachers of Languages

- the three school sectors, representing and advocating for 1400 EQ schools, 288 Catholic schools and 189 Independent schools.

Queensland's consultation identified a range of strengths, as well as issues and concerns, for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) consideration when revising the draft shape paper. The feedback is structured in the following way:

- a section identifying key strengths, issues and concerns

- a section-by-section analysis of the draft shape paper including a *Way forward* for each section.

In relevant sections, the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, named as Australian Languages in the draft shape paper, will be discussed in relation to the development of a Framework for Australian Languages.

The draft shape paper states that there will be common procedures and guidelines (page 31) for curriculum writers released with the revised shape paper. This is the first time ACARA has taken such an approach.

The information that would normally be part of the procedures and guidelines should be included to provide detail that is currently missing from the draft shape paper and which is needed to inform understanding of the Australian Curriculum: Languages and the Framework for Australian Languages.

Consequently, when the common procedures and guidelines are released, there should be an opportunity for further feedback on the shape paper.

1. Key strengths, issues and concerns

1.1 Strengths

The draft shape paper has the following strengths:

- The Languages learning area is appropriately placed in the landscape of the Australian Curriculum. The journey of Languages education is accurately described and key considerations that have shaped conversations about the place of Languages in the curriculum are clearly explained.

- The draft shape paper makes a detailed and compelling case for the value of language education, including the importance of the Languages learning area as a focus in Australian schools and the direction for the coming design of the curriculum.

- The draft shape paper presents an opportunity to establish the place of the Languages learning area in the curriculum through an aspirational approach that assumes all students will have an opportunity to learn a language P–8 and to continue that learning throughout secondary school.

- The place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, named as Australian Languages in the shape paper, is established in the curriculum and the status, position, importance and uniqueness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages is appropriately recognised.

- New ways of conceptualising the Languages learning area beyond communicating are explained, including the relationship between languages and culture, the place of the individual as a communicator and as a participant in communication, and defining self and developing identity through intercultural experiences.

- The diversity of learners and pathways are recognised and defined, including the hours of study required to provide meaningful and effective language education.

1.2 Issues and concerns

The following key issues and concerns have been identified for consideration in the revision of the draft shape paper. The comments are made with the proviso that a set of common procedures and guidelines with additional information for curriculum writers will accompany the revised shape paper.

- There is a lack of cohesion between the key concepts and curriculum organisers and a lack of clarity about the purpose and organisation of Languages as a learning area.

- Terminology is not used consistently across the draft shape paper leading to a lack of clarity about the purpose of language learning.

- The proposals for the organisation and the conceptualisation of the learning area have implications for implementation. Of particular concern is the continuity and frequency of language learning.

- The purpose of the shape paper is to inform curriculum writers about "the shape of the curriculum". To some extent the issues identified are about a lack of exemplification, which makes the draft shape paper subject to reader interpretation.

- The Framework for Australian Languages establishes the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages in the Australian Curriculum: Languages, but the draft shape paper does not explain sufficiently how the framework will be organised and how programs will "do justice to the current state of each particular language".

- The common procedures and guidelines for curriculum writers may contain the detail that would explain these issues. This information is crucial and is required when considering the draft shape paper. The proposed common procedures and guidelines, along with the framework and protocols, should be released as draft documents for comment.

1.2.1 Clarity

There is a lack of clarity about the purpose and organisation of Languages as a learning area as it is initially explained and then linked through the shape paper to other concepts.

While the paper proposes a vision for learning in Languages, when that vision is explained the concept of Languages as a learning area is not clear nor is its uniqueness represented. The detailed explanation attempts to answer the questions of identity and uniqueness but the shape paper does not clearly or coherently reach a conclusion.

As a consequence, how learning will be informed, and how the curriculum will be organised, is still highly conceptual. While it may be argued that this is the purpose of a shape paper, the concepts presented have not been synthesised sufficiently to be clear.

The Framework for the Australian Languages also needs clarification. The shape paper identifies that one approach will not recognise nor do justice to the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages; however, the framework, and its relationship to the concepts and constructs in the shape paper, is not sufficiently explained. Writers will need greater clarity in order to know how to balance shape paper constructs with existing approaches and a framework that is not described and is still to be developed.

Way forward

- Revise the draft to draw together the information already in the document to clearly explain how language, culture and their relationships inform the design of the curriculum

- Define the concepts by linking them to specifics about what young people should know and do.

- Explain how the concepts and the curriculum organisers of the draft shape paper inform the Framework for Australian Languages.

- Release the common procedures and guidelines for curriculum writers and the Framework for Australian Languages as draft documents for comment. Include drafts of the protocols when engaging with communities in decision making about languages and learners.

1.2.2 Cohesion

The relationship between the three key concepts, the three aims and the three strands can be aligned but the way these are balanced and integrated into a curriculum is not clearly observable or explained. Consequently, the paper invites reader interpretation that may lead to a divergence of views and opinions about the intended meaning and may not inform a consistent approach to curriculum and framework design.

For example, paragraph 49 states the key concepts and understandings are the foundation of the curriculum while paragraph 62 states that learning is organised through the strands. At no point in the paper is the relationship explained any further. In fact, after paragraph 62 a further set of organisers — knowledge, skills and understanding — are introduced. Concepts are layered upon organisers and headings without regard for the clarity of interrelationships, inviting the reader to interpret the intent and the meaning.

Importantly, the shape paper does not explain how there will be cohesion between the constructs of the language-specific curriculum and the Framework for Australian Languages.

Way forward

- Address the lack of clarity in the relationship between the key concepts and the other curriculum organisers by explaining in more detail the alignment of concepts across the curriculum, including the Framework for Australian Languages.

- Explain how the aims and the strands are related, balanced and linked to knowledge, skills and understanding.

- Explain how communicative proficiency, higher order cognitive processes and intercultural understanding will inform the achievement standards.

1.2.3 Consistency

There is a lack of consistency of message across the draft shape paper because of inconsistent use of terminology or the same terminology being used to describe varying concepts. For example, the way the words "proficient" and "understanding" are used.

The term "proficiency" is used but discussion about the purpose of language learning clouds its meaning. If language learning is more than proficient communication in the target language, then this is not made clear. Or, if proficiency is "to instil knowledge, to deepen understanding, to stimulate reflection and to foster skills", this should be explained concisely and communicated consistently throughout the document, particularly in reference to the achievement standards.

The term "understanding" is used in *Key concepts and understandings*; *Understanding language learning and literacy*; *Understanding language, culture and their relationship*; *Understanding: analysing language as a source of making meaning*; and, *The nature of knowledge, skills and understanding*. This is confusing and undermines the clarity of the document.

Consequently, the concept of language learning proposed in some sections is not consistently communicated throughout the paper.

1.2.4 Implementation

The draft shape paper proposes changes to the way the Languages learning area is conceptualised and organised. This could significantly impact upon the resourcing of schools, particularly in the short to medium term, when meeting stipulated time allocations F–8 may not be possible.

- The proposals to begin differentiation of the curriculum prior to Years 11–12, to ensure continuity of study, and to significantly increase the allocation of hours, as well as reorganise and redesign courses, will require additional resourcing.

- The hours of study required to provide meaningful and effective language education are provided but information about the nature of language acquisition and the need for frequent, regular and continuous study is not. Frequency of study is as crucial as continuity and time on task.

- Language teaching focuses on the study of languages for communicative purposes. An increased emphasis on intercultural aspects, particularly around the strand *Reciprocating* will require specialist knowledge in the K–10 context.

- Queensland language syllabuses are designed for second language learners. Legislation changes would be necessary in Queensland to include a provision for eligibility criteria.

- The draft shape paper includes in the preamble a statement that "school authorities need to consider their responsibilities in relation to program conditions". Later in the document it states, "systems and schools determine how best to organise the indicative hours into programs". Comments of this nature need to be clarified in terms of intent, particularly as the former statement is unique to this draft shape paper.

- Define the way eligibility and incentives will be used in a national context, including explaining the role of the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) and how collaboration through the Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages (CCAFL) will be facilitated.

2.   Section-by-section analysis

2.1   Introductory sections

2.1.1 Strengths

The essential features of Languages as a learning area and the rationale for learning them are captured:

- The paper sets out an ambitious approach to language education. It presents a detailed and compelling case for the value of language education.

- It assumes all students will have an opportunity to learn a language P–8 and continue that learning throughout secondary school.

- It sets out a clear rationale for the necessity to study a language.

- It links educational needs to cultural realities in Australian society and broader economic, social and political aspirations for Australian society in an increasingly globalising context.

- The language used in the paper is inclusive and mindful of the range of the audience.

- It highlights the ingredients of successful Language learning programs and offers extensive background to the reasoning for language learning and learners.

- The prospect of greater opportunities to study Australian Languages is an initiative that will strengthen the position of all languages.

2.1.2 Issues and concerns

While the draft shape paper is comprehensive in the introductory sections, the notion of lifelong learning still needs to be acknowledged, including further study of languages beyond the schooling context and articulation to the tertiary sector.

The early sections of the shape paper explore new approaches to learning, but there is a tension between the purpose of language learning and the notion of proficient communication. The Lo Bianco quote on page 11 summarises the purpose of learning languages beyond the scope of proficient communication. This broader conceptualisation of language learning is extended in paragraph 23, where it refers to "the development of reflective dimensions" as well as "deeper awareness of who one is, a fuller understanding of the conditions shaping one's identity" and "metalinguistic awareness".

These sentiments are contrasted with paragraph 15, with its focus on "being able to communicate", which does not match the intent of the earlier goals about a broader conceptualisation of the purpose of language learning. This narrower conception of proficient communication becomes more significant in the latter parts of the document. This will be discussed further in the response.

It would be valuable to include greater mention of the nature of language learning — the way in which language is acquired in general and how this should affect the way language is acquired in different educational contexts. Emphasis needs to be given to frequency and regularity. Time on task is important, but so is how that time is distributed.

While the reality may be that this will be at the discretion of each educational authority, it is important that frequency and regularity, along with indicative hours, be clearly and consistently related to the development of achievement standards.

> **Way forward**
>
> - Explain the broader concepts of the nature of language learning.
>
> - Explore the relationship of indicative hours, achievement standards, and continuity, frequency and regularity of study.
>
> - Acknowledge the notion of lifelong learning, including the relationship and further involvement with the study of languages beyond the schooling context and the articulation to the tertiary sector.
>
> - Include reference to the retention of the students to continue their studies through to senior levels and beyond. For example, page 4, paragraph 4, states, "how to encourage more students to study languages at senior secondary levels …". While it is important to encourage more students to study languages, there should also be a statement to encourage retention.
>
> - Combine the information in paragraphs 8 and 9.
>
> - Define proficient communication as encompassing the broad concepts explained in the *distinctiveness of languages in the curriculum*.
>
> - Include in paragraph 19 the notions of communities, families and schools along with land, environment and the people.

2.2 Key concepts and understandings in learning languages

2.2.1 Strengths

- The direction of the key concepts is acknowledged and supported. The draft shape paper captures a contemporary understanding of language, culture and language learning. The language, background and information is clearly expressed and easily understood. Different aspects are clearly defined and explained.

- References to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, or "Australian Languages", are generally consistent with the positions recently developed in Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabuses P–12.

- The recognition that schools need to work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in decision making, using protocols to guide the engagement, aligns with approaches used in Queensland where the school, in consultation with the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, makes decisions about the appropriate language content for different learners.

- Language learning is explained as an intercultural process; one cannot learn a language without understanding the culture that has created it. Language and culture are intertwined; both must be learnt and taught at the same time for students to truly understand the process of learning and understanding the language. This also assists students to appreciate the differences, similarities and complexities of the target language and their own language and culture.

2.2.2 Issues and concerns

The general intent of the draft shape paper is supported but key parts of the paper lack clarity. Interpretations differ about the interrelationship of the organising constructs across the document, particularly in relation to the key concepts, aims and strands.

The issues around the concepts are the extent to which they align across the aims and the strands. This point is also explored in the aims and strands analysis (see 2.4.2).

The word "understanding" is used across the document in *Key concepts and understandings*; *Understanding language learning and literacy*; *Understanding language, culture and their relationship*; *Understanding: analysing language as a source of making meaning*; and, *The nature of knowledge, skills and understanding*. It is unclear whether the meaning is the same across all contexts. The use of the word "understanding" is unclear.

In defining "understanding", greater emphasis could be placed on the nature of language learning.

Way forward

- Include information about the need for frequency of instruction and exposure to the language to ensure success in language learning.

- Consider changing paragraph 26, which states, "They work alongside other conventions…" to "They work alongside other non-verbal conventions …".

- Consider changing paragraph 37 from "and communicating with others" to "… it is a process whereby the learner's whole communicative repertoire expands with additional resources from which to draw when making meaning".

- Make references to returning to communities to revisit agreements and sustain engagement in paragraph 47. The information about engagement with communities is very important, but there is also a need for the nature of this engagement and its longevity to be explained in this paragraph.

- Define the term "understanding" in different contexts or rationalise the use of the term and ensure it is used consistently.

- Add a glossary to explain terminology, particularly when terms are used in a range of contexts.

2.3 The learners, pathways and time on task in learning languages

2.3.1 Strengths

- The three program types and the differentiation for the Australian Languages defined in the shape paper are appropriately described.

- There is strong recognition of the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages in the curriculum and the need to "do justice" to existing programs is welcomed.

- Time on task supports the paper's earlier references to appropriate provision and continuity, and the place of Languages in the curriculum. The flexibility to organise additional time where courses are content-based and bilingual is welcomed.

- All terminology in this section, in particular the use of the term "home user learners" is clear and appropriate. The groupings reflect Australia's multicultural society and the different pathways by which learners arrive in the languages classroom.

2.3.2 Issues and concerns

Different languages learners

The Australian Curriculum: Languages will have three program types to address the needs of different language learners. Queensland language syllabuses are designed for second language learners. An initiative to introduce a differentiated language curriculum will require legislation changes to include a provision for eligibility criteria.

There are references to heritage learners and to home user learners. It would be clearer if only one term was used to describe this group of language learners. Again, a glossary would be a useful tool to manage and clarify the use of terms.

Participants in the Queensland consultation commented on the complexities of establishing the different grouping of learners in a school context and specifically the issues of:

- categorising home users of one language, but first language users of a target language and English

- categorising students as second language learners of English

- dealing systemically with these categories of students.

Further expansion on how the diverse pathways of learning will be supported in the classroom context needs to be considered. How the curriculum will be informed by the need to manage this diversity and the recognition that there will be additional resourcing should be acknowledged in the introductory sections of the draft shape paper. This will document that these issues exist as part of the way forward.

Some discussion of the situation in universities, where many languages departments have been closed in recent years, could be included. Potentially there will be a serious and severe shortage of qualified, quality languages teachers to provide these programs.

Related to the particular pathways for language learning in schools are issues about how schools will fund different approaches. While secondary schools generally have dedicated language rooms and may have language centres, this is not the case in the primary context. In primary schools there are implications for the provision of dedicated language classrooms or classrooms where students are immersed in the target language or where the physical appearance of the classroom is given a bilingual approach through collaboration between the primary classroom teacher and the language teacher.

Australian Languages

For Australian Languages, programs will need to be implemented that recognise and complement the current state of each particular language and continue the support for revival and maintenance of languages. To do this, the Framework for Australian Languages should:

- ensure that the curriculum has an authenticity appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and focuses on knowledge, culture and communities incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working and learning

- continue the approach in the QSA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabuses, and in particular include the creation of space for an Indigenous skills strand

- exemplify approaches to the co-development of curriculum based on models of community ownership, including:
  - using protocols to guide community engagement in decisions about language selection, learner groups and other matters related to a consultative approach that allows for reflection and sustains partnerships
  - building, maintaining and revisiting partnerships between communities and schools such as those successfully employed and demonstrated through the Queensland P–12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander syllabuses.
- clarify the role of the Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages (CCAFL) in development of the Framework for Australian Languages.

The appropriateness of the term "encompassing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages" is best determined by the owners of those languages. Currently, the term "Australian Languages" is not used in the Queensland context. The preference is for the term "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages" because it is respectful in acknowledging the two Indigenous groups of Australia.

Time on task

The draft paper proposes a flexible structure F–12 that potentially allows multiple entry points, but also assumes that all students will learn Languages F–8. It states that, "systems and schools determine how best to organise the indicative hours into programs". The indicative hours inform the development of curriculum. While it is recognised that the time allocations are appropriate at this time, the paper does not clarify the link between the different entry points and the expectations set out in the achievement standards.

The proposed hours for the primary years require significant additional resourcing. Other phases of learning have variety in the way languages are offered but, for most primary schools in Queensland, the hours suggested would be greater than current allocations.

From the beginning of 2011, Education Queensland schools (approximately 90 per cent) were requested to deliver mandatory Key Learning Area (KLA) languages for all Year 6, 7 and 8 students for 200 hours. The provision of languages in other year levels (P–5; 9–12) is a decision that is made at the discretion of each school principal based on the needs of the student cohort and the community.

It also needs to be recognised that Year 7 is currently part of the primary years in Queensland. The draft shape paper identifies that "school authorities need to consider their responsibilities in relation to program conditions". The paper should provide additional information that acknowledges the scope of the changes.

It should be noted that:

- achievement standards would only be possible when a language course is offered with adequate frequency. In the primary years, it would not be sufficient to teach a language for a couple of years in early years and then have a break of one or more years. Even if the time on task is achieved during the P–6 year levels, this significant break in language learning will severely impact on achievement levels. Likewise, in Years 7 and 8, continuity of learning is vital and one-term or one-semester programs cannot attain the same achievement levels as programs taught with greater frequency and continuity

- with reference to time on task, it will not be possible in the short to medium term to resource systems to fulfil the stipulated time allocations proposed for all students from P–8, as summarised in the draft shape paper on page 23

- the issue of time on task is critical given that the curriculum content and achievement standard are predicated upon the indicative hours.

Way forward

- Change the reference on page 31 from "heritage learners" to "home user learners". It would be preferable if only the term "home user learners" is used across the document.

- Include in the revised shape paper a reference to and considerations about the grouping of learners who have English as an additional language or dialect.

- Acknowledge in the introductory sections of the revised shape paper concerns about resourcing where this is relevant to a jurisdiction, sector or school.

- Clarify the role of CCAFL in development of the Framework for Australian Languages.

- Ensure that the Framework for Australian Languages focuses on knowledge, culture and communities incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working and learning and including an Indigenous skills strand.

- Use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages in preference to Australian Languages.

2.4   Curriculum design for languages

2.4.1 Strengths

The proposal for the design of the curriculum captures current approaches for learning but emphasises language and culture, the role of the individual and the reciprocity that occurs in communicative encounters.

- The overall aims and the information provided are relevant.

- The strands proposed capture some important dimensions of language learning. It will be for the curriculum writers to adequately transfer these concepts to the curriculum so that each strand may be objectively assessed.

- The use of the word "understanding" in *The nature of knowledge, skills and understanding* section is qualified by the explanation "knowing that" and "knowing why". This is a useful way to inform readers of the conceptual implications.

- The general capabilities are effectively integrated within the paper. The cross-curriculum priorities are appropriately described for the Languages learning area.

- The frame of reference for curriculum development across all languages, including the relationship between indicative hours of study and achievement standards for the different cohorts of students, is clear and appropriate.

- The argument for significant allocation of hours and the organisation of courses by the types of learner is logical and supported.

2.4.2 Issues and concerns

Aims and strands

The draft shape paper states that common procedures and guidelines will accompany the shape paper. The detail to be provided in the procedures and guidelines may address many of the issues that follow. For that reason, it is crucial to understanding the draft shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages that such information be available as a draft document for feedback before finalising the shape paper.

Cohesion

The proposed Australian Curriculum: Languages is designed around *Key concepts and understandings*; *Aims*; *Strands*; and *The nature of knowledge, understandings and skills*. These organisers are described in detail but how they will be used to organise the curriculum is not detailed. Readers are left to make their own assumptions about the shape of curriculum.

Alignment and definitions

The relationship between the aims and strands needs to be clarified in terms of how they will inform the organisation of the curriculum. Some of the conceptual constructs and understandings represent an opportunity for a new direction for the Languages learning area; however, there is also an overlap of information that makes the differences between some aims and strands unclear.

Aims

When comparing the following two aims, the concepts in both are similar. Both involve an intercultural context and both are based on engaging in that context. If the main difference is the cognition required, then that point needs to be more prominently positioned and explained.

For example, in the aim, *Understanding a language, culture and their relationship, and thereby developing an intercultural capability in communication*, learners "develop a relationship between the language and culture in an intercultural exchange".

In *Self-awareness: understanding self as communicator*, learners who step "outside the known space of their own language and culture and enter a new communicative space" are afforded "the opportunity for noticing and comparing".

Strands

In the strands, there are similar concerns. The strand *Communicating* is about communication in receptive and productive modes; *Understanding* is about the relationship of concepts, contexts and processes to the use of language when communicating; and *Reciprocating* is acting upon one's own and others contributions when communicating. These are quite complex concepts and well described; however, the descriptions are dense and focus heavily on communication.

Communication is important but it is not everything the Languages learning area represents. This point is made in the section on the distinctiveness of languages in the curriculum, where Lo Bianco states that language learning "is intimately linked to the essentially humanistic, cultural and intellectual reasons for making education compulsory" and "that they potentially challenge and extend the sense of self of the student".

For the reader the parts are evident but the whole is not. The similarities, described above, make the strands difficult to extrapolate to a curriculum and to explain how evidence of each of the strands will be different. A clear definition and consistent use of the term "communicating" would assist in differentiating the strands.

Clarity

Some of the nomenclature is quite new and the concepts of the aims and strands differ in emphasis from current Queensland approaches. Without clear explanations, these ideas will be subject to reader interpretation.

When considering the intent of the conceptual and practical organisers of the shape paper, it is clear that while the key concepts position language and culture as the underpinning ideas for the curriculum, and the aims are drawn from the key concepts, the strands more closely align with a typical language course construct about communicating.

The strands about *Communicating* and *Understanding* align with the notion of productive and receptive communication, but this is not the way the strands are explained. As the draft shape paper moves between sets of organisers, balance across the concepts change. Consequently, some of what is clear in the earlier part of the draft shape paper becomes lost and the intent of the overall document is less clear.

For example, the draft shape paper does state that the strands will not be weighted or discrete but it does not explain how they will be balanced.

Purpose

The draft shape paper has a strong emphasis on learning languages for communicative purposes; however, in the earlier part of the paper, the concepts of culture, and the relationship between language and culture, promise a wider scope than proficient communication.

The aim: *Self-awareness: understanding self as communicator*, and the strand: *Reciprocating: interpreting self in relation to others as language users*, are also described as more than communicating proficiently in the language.

There needs to be clear alignment across the draft shape paper of the purpose of learning a language and this should be clearly observable in the concepts and organisers that inform the curriculum.

Implications

Conceptual approaches, such as the proposed strand of *Reciprocating* and the emphasis on intercultural understanding as an integral and assessable part of language learning, will require extensive professional development.

References should be made about the implications for current approaches to teaching, learning and assessment and the need for specific materials that provide opportunities for students to develop skills in all the areas of communicating. This could include the curriculum writing team identifying in the elaborations approaches to communicating, as identified in the strands, as well as ways to develop intercultural capability.

Modes

The status of the modes, listening, speaking, viewing, reading and writing need to be clearly stated. The modes are used to organise and report achievement in some language courses. The shape paper establishes the nature of the modes but does not communicate how they relate to the strands and how the skills, strands and modes will be integrated.

The nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in the learning of languages

The sections describing the nature of knowledge, skills and understanding in learning languages provide an appropriate framework for describing content in the Languages learning area.

Ways to develop learning and assessment of knowledge and skills are familiar to teachers. However, how teachers will assess in the area of understanding, particularly intercultural understanding in the strand *Reciprocating*, is likely to present difficulties, especially in the early years.

The word "understanding" has been used with the aims and strands. Its use again could lead to some confusion about terminology.

General capabilities and Cross-curriculum priorities

The information presented in the General capabilities and Cross-curriculum priorities is clear and relevant to the language-specific contexts. In many ways, these areas have a strong correlation with language learning that could be acknowledged more.

There is some need to clarify broader terminology in order to go beyond generalisations and stereotypes. For example, the use of "Asia" could be broadly or narrowly applied.

Literacy needs to be more clearly explained. The role of the language teacher in learning about literacy is not fully understood nor is the methodology by which language learning may facilitate this. The wording around this general capability needs to accommodate the centrality of learning languages in the development of literacy and the recognition of the appropriateness of particular approaches to literacy learning.

Consideration needs to be given to how specific teaching materials in intercultural language learning would be beneficial for language teachers. Explicit, explanatory and exploratory talk requires time. Advice about the nature of resourcing and supporting learning is needed. Advice to curriculum writers could include suggestions for how the structure of the target language can be compared with English in a particular unit of work.

Way forward

- Clarify terminology using examples and explanations in a glossary.
- Include advice about how literacy learning and building intercultural capability need to be explicitly addressed in the context of language learning.

Key considerations for developing the Australian Curriculum: Languages

The indicative number of hours of study, and the presumption that languages are taught with adequate frequency and regularity, is likely to lead to significant language learning. However, along with the recommendations for indicative hours of study, there should be guidance about frequency, regularity and continuity of language learning.

One of the key considerations is that the curriculum be designed to enable all students to engage in learning a language in addition to English. It should be added that these students should also have opportunity to progress in that language. Learning programs delivered in disjointed and irregular ways will not allow for progression in learning. This should be noted on the diagrams.

The diagrams, while useful, could be more informative. For example, the use of L1 and L2 can be confusing in the naming of the achievement standards as they are used elsewhere to describe first language learners and second language learners.

Time on task and meeting indicative time allocations raises issues around how this will be achieved consistently. This has been discussed in the section addressing time on task above (page 13). However, it is worth reiterating that time allocations impact on schools and students. Where students are unable to achieve continuity, they will not be able to achieve the proficiency levels necessary at the end of their schooling.

It must be clearly stated that the achievement standards would only be possible when a language course is offered with adequate frequency. In the primary years, it would not be sufficient to teach a language for a couple of years in the early years and then have a break of one or more years. Even if the time on task is achieved during the P–6 year levels, this significant break in language learning will severely impact on achievement. Likewise, in Years 7 and 8, continuity of learning is vital and one-term or one-semester programs

cannot attain the same achievement levels as programs taught with greater frequency and continuity.

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Way forward

- Clarify in relation to the key considerations of time on task and achievement standards that frequency and continuity of study are crucial to successful programs.

- Clarify the diagrams by using different nomenclature for the achievement standards.

- Indicate on the diagrams and in supporting text the need for frequency and continuity of study.

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Languages to be developed

The criteria used to determine the development of language-specific curriculum and the proposed staging of language-specific curriculum are appropriate.

The draft paper proposal that the language-specific curriculum be developed in three stages is supported.

But, Queensland participants felt there should be a fourth stage that allows other languages not currently identified to be included as needed. This would give some voice to statements in the earlier part of the document about the diversity of cultures and languages in Australia.

The criteria for selecting languages to be part of the Australian Curriculum should be coupled with the proposal for staging of development. This would directly align the criteria with the languages chosen and strengthen the case for each selection. Currently, the justifications for each language are not balanced amongst the languages and, for some of the European languages, are incomplete and not substantial.

In relation to discussions for Years 11–12 continuing through CCAFL, the role of CCAFL and the relationship between the current structures of the framework and future form of the Australian Curriculum needs to be clarified.

As stated previously, Queensland syllabuses are currently for second language learners. The provision of a differentiated languages curriculum will require changes to legislation to include a provision for eligibility criteria.

The proposal to begin differentiation of the curriculum prior to Years 11–12 is likely to require schools to provide additional language programs. The aim that all students study a language F–8 and the provision of three program types will require additional suitably qualified teachers, especially in primary schools.

Due to the way the shape paper will inform the writing of curriculum for eleven languages and the Australian Languages Framework, the common procedures and guidelines are as important as the shape paper. Draft versions of the procedures and guidelines should be made available for comment, as should the Framework for Australian Languages.

Whilst the logic behind the choice of Chinese and Italian is clear and valid, there is a need for the proposed changes to, and guidance about, Languages education in Australia to be delivered in a more timely manner. As different personnel will be involved with the development of programs for each language, it would be preferable if more languages could be included in the first stage or if all languages could be developed concurrently.

Way forward

- Consider a fourth stage for further languages currently not identified to be added when such actions can be justified.

- Move the criteria in paragraph 78 to paragraph 79 and then delete the justifications used for each particular language in paragraph 79.

- Clarify the role of CCAFL in the development of the senior curriculum and the Framework for Australian Languages. Also, clarify the status of the CCAFL syllabus framework in light of an Australian Curriculum.

- Strengthen the introductory sections of the shape paper with specific recognition of the implications to jurisdictions, sectors and schools of additional time allocations, differentiated courses and continuity.

- Make available draft versions of the common procedures and guidelines, and the Framework for Australian Languages for comment.

- Consider concurrent development of all curricula.