

Queensland response to the extended and revised draft learning continua

Australian Curriculum General Capabilities

September 2012



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Queensland Studies Authority

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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 General Capabilities — Draft Extended and Revised Learning Continua. Queensland supports the development of an Australian Curriculum that will provide consistent and explicit curriculum expectations across the nation.

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

- representatives of the three schooling sectors, representing and advocating for 1400 EQ schools, 288 Catholic schools and 188 Independent schools
- QSA officers from the P–12 Implementation Branch, the P–12 Resources Branch and the Australian Curriculum Branch.

Queensland's consultation identified strengths, issues and concerns for ACARA's consideration when redrafting the general capabilities learning continua.

This response is organised in the following way:

- an overview of the key strengths, issues and concerns
- an outline of specific issues and concerns about each of the seven general capabilities and a way forward for identified issues and concerns.

1 Key strengths, issues and concerns

1.1 Strengths

The Queensland consultation participants identified the following strengths across the General Capabilities — Draft Extended and Revised Learning Continua.

Clarity

- the descriptions generally make clear the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students can reasonably be expected to have developed at particular stages of schooling

Detail

- the descriptions are written with an appropriate amount of detail and the use of examples is supported

Progression

- the knowledge, understanding and skills build appropriately and provide a useful tool for providing for differentiation between students

Useability

- the learning continua supports the learning area content descriptions and the organisation in two year junctures is generally supported
- the expansion of the learning continua to include Foundation Year, Year 4 and Year 8 adds more detail and assists the utility of the general capabilities for planning student learning
- the refinement of the sub-elements in many continua has provided greater clarity
- sub-elements are useful as a curriculum construct that sits beside the learning areas.

1.2 Issues and concerns

The following general key issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- the technique of using “cognitive verbs” to describe progression is problematic in many instances as the focus of the sequence lacks clarity, e.g. it is unclear if the sequence about “Ethical concepts” (in *Understanding ethical concepts and issues*) is about understanding these concepts or analysing examples of ethical concepts in a variety of ways that do not necessarily indicate greater complexity or sophistication

Detail

- the length of some statements confuse the focus of the learning — participants agreed that all statements should be as short and succinct as possible
- participants in the consultation had divided opinions about the relationship between the Literacy and Numeracy continua and the English and Mathematics learning areas, however the general view was that Literacy and Numeracy should be clearly distinguished from these learning areas and be able to be viewed as distinct.

2 Literacy learning continuum

2.1 Strengths

The following strengths were identified.

Clarity

- most descriptions make clear the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students can reasonably be expected to have developed at particular stages of schooling
- the relationship between the descriptions in the continuum is closely tied to the English learning area, which strengthens this disciplinary knowledge

Detail

- the descriptions provide more detail as to how students can demonstrate and progress in each sub-element
- the new continuum has more detailed descriptions that are an appropriate length and are more suitable to assist teachers understanding in each area
- the level of detail provided in the descriptions supports a deeper understanding of literacy for non-specialist teachers in the identification of knowledge, understanding and skills and will assist with planning

Language

- the language and terminology generally aligns with the Australian Curriculum learning areas
- the language used is generally appropriate, clear and precise and the additional detail should provide better understanding
- the language in the new continuum is more user friendly than the previous continuum and reflects the Australian Curriculum content strands and the language used by teachers

Pitch

- the new and revised descriptions show an increase in skills and knowledge and are pitched appropriately for the year levels targeted
- the year level descriptions match the expectations of students for each phase of learning

Progression

- each description works in collaboration with the last to build students' knowledge and increase the range of strategies, texts and methods the students must undertake to achieve
- the progression in the modes and behaviours described in each description gives greater clarity to the content descriptors
- the sequence of most of the identified knowledge is consistent with the content descriptions in the English learning area

Useability

- the Learning Area examples provide additional detail that will assist teachers to embed literacy learning.

2.2 Issues and Concerns

The following issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- some descriptions lack clarity, e.g. in the *Word knowledge* strand, the descriptions about vocabulary are somewhat ambiguous over the stages of schooling and the inclusion of examples would assist understanding
- in *Comprehending texts...*, *Composing texts...*, and *Visual Knowledge* strands, greater clarity about how language and visual elements combine in specialised ways within texts in different learning areas is needed

Detail

- the level of detail in the descriptions and the number of separated sub-elements is excessive
- more detail in some strands and sub-elements would be useful to describe the skill development and clarify the progression from one level to the next, e.g. some examples of Literacy in the Learning Areas are repeated verbatim with no clarification of the progression
- some sub-elements have too many detailed content lists such as “Sentence structure” and “Expressing opinion and point of view” which puts too much focus at a micro-level on language rather than literacy skills for particular purposes

Language

- some of the language used is unclear, e.g. in Year 6 *Grammar knowledge* strand the descriptor, “use of a full range of sentence types” this is very vague
- the use of words to indicate the quality of learning such as “some” “developing” and “most” and “limited” sound like achievement standards rather than statements of learning

Pitch

- there are some descriptions where the pitch is inappropriate, e.g. in *Composing texts through speaking, writing and creating* strand, students in Foundation through to Year 2 should also be developing editing skills such as re-reading for meaning, checking spelling and punctuation
- pitch and uses of verbs is inconsistent across year levels and needs to be revised, e.g.
 - students only start editing in Year 4
 - “control” of sentences only appears from Year 8
 - “evaluate” in relation to comprehension only appears from Year 8

Progression

- in the *Word knowledge* strand under “Sound and letter knowledge” sub-element, a focus on sound and letter knowledge should progress past Foundation — this would still be in development through to Year 2, e.g. blends
- the sequence of skills is not always consistent with the Literacy strand of English, e.g. students evaluate literal and inferential meaning in texts before Year 8

Useability

- the two year junctures are difficult to use
- inclusion of examples would greatly assist teachers to use the continua however, there is limited use of examples (outside the specific Learning Area examples) and some examples need to be revised, e.g. Year 6 History does not have persuasive texts in the Skills content descriptions
- there is a focus on specific content knowledge of the Language strand of the English learning area which requires a deeper understanding of the curriculum content, e.g. articles, conditionality, and prepositional phrases in Grammar. In the *Text knowledge* strand, the “Text cohesion” sub-element refers to specific grammatical features rather than looking at cohesion of structure or the whole text level
- the structure of some of the descriptions is closed and exhaustive such as “Composing... texts” sub-element, e.g. in Year 2, “students compose a limited range of learning area texts for familiar and some new audiences incorporating known topic information and familiar language structures”
- too many sub-elements are provided within the strands of Literacy, which impacts on the usability of the document, e.g. separate sub-elements for “Words and word groups” and “Exploratory language”.

Way forward

- Revise the capability descriptions and specific examples to better align to the Australian curriculum year level descriptions, content descriptions, achievement standards, and scope and sequence tables.
- Revise the Literacy continuum in single year levels not two year intervals. This would make the descriptions a more usable resource for teachers of all year levels when planning and delivering learning programs.
- Include at least one or two examples for every description (each cell of each row) at every level to clarify meaning and assist usability.
- Consider the suggested changes described in the *Issues and Concerns* section.
- Include clear advice and guidelines for teachers of all learning areas about how literacy can be included. The document has a close relationship with the English learning area, so it will be important that all teachers understand how the Literacy continuum supports other learning areas.

3 Numeracy learning continuum

3.1 Strengths

The following strengths were identified.

Clarity

- in some places there is a clear focus on “numeracy” rather than “mathematics” by emphasising the use and context, e.g. “Using money”

Detail

- the detail of the continua descriptions is generally appropriate and the pitch is consistent with the mathematical knowledge and skills presented in Mathematics learning area curriculum content

Pitch

- the links to the Mathematics scope and sequence confirms the pitch of the continua descriptions

Progression

- the progression is consistent with the mathematical knowledge and skills presented in Mathematics learning area and builds in degrees of challenge from one level to the next.

3.2 Issues and concerns

The following issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- there needs to be a clear delineation throughout the continuum between mathematics and numeracy:
 - mathematics builds students’ mathematical knowledge, understandings, and skills
 - numeracy encompasses the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students need to use mathematics in a wide range of situations (ACARA, 2012).
- a “numeracy” continuum should identify the related mathematical knowledge and skills, and contextualise these through learning area examples in all learning areas and in students’ lives to build an understand of the role and purpose of mathematics in the world
- some descriptors are a rewording of the Mathematics curriculum content — numeracy should focus on the contexts and real life situations
- use of the term “visualise/visualising” in *Using fractions, decimals, percentages, ratios and rates* and *Using Spatial Reasoning* is problematic as it is not a demonstrable skill
- more clarity is required in all descriptions to include behaviours and dispositions

Detail

- there are no Foundation descriptions in some sub-elements, e.g. fractions could be expressed as an understanding of equal parts
- there are no learning area examples as in the Literacy continuum, and sufficient detail is also absent in many places

Language

The clarity and language in the following descriptions could be improved.

- *Calculating and estimating with whole numbers*
 - Understanding and using numbers in contexts: in Years 4, 6, and 8 the term “use numbers” would not include use numbers in calculations as this is another sub-element — examples indicating usage in this sub-element would clarify the distinction
- *Estimating and calculating*
 - Year 6: this description should include a qualifying range so the application is clearer
 - Year 10: the description does not make sense and should be modified to indicate intent and purpose
- *Recognising and using patterns and relationships*
 - Year 2: remove the reference to “around them” and replace with “identify, describe and continue number patterns and patterns in the environment”
 - Year 6: the action to “look for patterns” is not helpful when making predictions and should be replaced with “describe pattern rules ...”
 - Year 8: the action “look for rules” is not helpful when making predictions — the development of rules is more pertinent
 - Understanding and using numbers in contexts
 - Year 8: replace “positive and negative numbers” with “integers” to reflect the statement from Numeracy across the curriculum — “Understanding mathematical terminology and the specific uses of language in mathematics is essential for numeracy”
- *Using Spatial Reasoning*
 - Visualising 2D shapes and 3D objects
 - Foundation Year: it is not clear what aspect of the description the phrase “using everyday language” refers to in the descriptor — “sort and name circles, triangles, squares, oblongs, spheres and boxes using everyday language”
 - Year 8: this description does not make sense as there is no purpose for applying understanding and should be modified to indicate intent and purpose
 - Year 8: remove the reference to students from the content description
- *Using measurement*
 - Operating with clocks, calendars and timetables: this needs to be included as a numeracy skill either in the Year 2 or Year 4 band. Reference to calendars to locate specific information is in a Year 2 Mathematics elaboration. Students will use calendars after Year 2 in practical and authentic situations.
- *Using fractions, decimals, percentages, ratios and rates*
 - Understanding proportional reasoning
 - Year 4: replace “1-place and 2-place decimals” with “decimals to tenths and hundredths”
 - Years 2, 4, 6 and 8: the action “visualise” in these descriptions is not appropriate and “recognise” should be considered as the replacement term

- *Interpreting and drawing conclusions from statistical information*
 - Describing outcomes of chance events
 - Year 10: incorporate the language used in the related content description from Mathematics, i.e. replace “interpretation” with “interpreting such language”.

Way forward

- Revise the Numeracy learning continuum with a focus on how students use mathematics in practical and authentic situations, and in each Learning Area, to differentiate the Numeracy continuum from the Mathematics curriculum and make it a clear, detailed and usable continuum. The Literacy continuum provides examples of literacy in other learning areas. It would be highly beneficial for teachers to replicate this approach for Numeracy.
- Revise the capability descriptions and specific examples to better align to the Australian curriculum, e.g. year level descriptions, content descriptions, achievement standards, and scope and sequence tables.
- Revise the Numeracy continuum in single year levels not two year intervals. This would make the descriptions a more usable resource for teachers of all year levels when planning and delivering learning programs.
- Revise using the suggested changes described in the *Issues and Concerns* section.

4 Information and communication technology learning continuum

4.1 Strengths

The following strengths were identified.

Detail

- the continua provide examples for every description which will assist teachers, especially those with low levels of knowledge, skills or confidence with ICTs
- the focus on ethical and security practices is a valued inclusion
- the further development of collaboration is appropriate and should be further developed to include negotiating, reflecting and co-creation in relation to others

Pitch

- the descriptions at each juncture are generally appropriate

Progression

- overall there is a progression of knowledge, skills and behaviours and there is a degree of challenge from each level to the next

Useability

- the layout of the continua gives teachers an easy to follow guide to where they should be incorporating ICT in their curriculum
- the strand and sub-element organisation, e.g. applying, investigating, creating communicating, and managing ICTs allows teachers to recognise the diverse considerations and applications of ICT in the classroom.

4.2 Issues and concerns

The following issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- the examples are very helpful and provide clarity but they need to be reviewed in relation to the complexity of some of the digital technologies
- in the *Creating with ICT* strand, the separation of the descriptors into the sub-elements “Generating ideas, plans and processes” and “Generating solutions to challenges and learning area tasks” is not clear — one set of descriptors need to focus on planning and the other needs to focus on solutions
- a glossary defining some of the terminology that appears in the examples would enhance clarity — linking some key terms to definitions would support teachers understanding of key elements, e.g. creative commons

Detail

- the *Investigating with ICT* strand would benefit from further refinement to represent how investigating with ICT actually occurs

Language

- in the “Intellectual property” sub-element for the Foundation Year and Year 2, the use of “follow class rules” and “class guidelines” does not fit with the language used throughout the continuum and the phrase “using common methods” is vague

Progression

- in many areas the “progression” is questionable due to the language used in the descriptors to identify progression from one point to the next, especially in the early years. The progression along the continuum needs to rely on the use of cognitive verbs and how the sub-elements develop with more sophistication and complexity
- in the *Applying social and ethical protocols and practices* strand it is important that the expectations in Year 6 are embedded in Years 8 and 10 rather than only being used at the one juncture
- some of the Cyber Safety areas are described too late as students need to be taught this at a much younger level, for example:
 - in the *Personal security* strand it is unclear how Year 4 can take action without recognising risks which first appear in Year 6
 - in “Information security” sub-element Year 10 students are to use a range of strategies for securing and protecting information and understand the need for “codes of conduct” (for example, varying passwords) — this should be introduced much earlier
 - in the *Managing and operating ICT* strand, there is little difference between Year 2 (identify **appropriate** hardware or software for a task) and Year 4 (identify **available** hardware and software required for a **given** task) and it is debateable whether this demonstrates progression
- the concept of social media should be included in Year 4
- some skills are introduced too late, for example, in the “Using ICT efficiently and ergonomically” sub-element Year 4 students “safely and independently operate a range of devices with regard to ergonomics” — some skills such as mouse use could be expected to be independent in Year 2 and not necessarily under “direct supervision”

Useability

- the Year 8 and 10 descriptors have a large amount of content that would need to be taught in addition to learning area curriculum content.

Way forward

- Reconsider using the “For Example” statements after the descriptions which potentially create a limited perspective of the description. In an area that is continually changing prescriptive examples do not reflect the evolving nature of technology. These generic examples do not do justice to the possibilities and could restrict teacher thinking in terms of planning for and providing learning opportunities. Although they do provide ideas to strengthen clarity and progression, links to these examples could assist in a similar way to the elaborations within the learning areas.
- Consider the suggested changes described in the *Issues and Concerns* section.

5 Critical and creative thinking learning continuum

5.1 Strengths

The following strengths were identified.

Clarity

- the continuum recognises the multifaceted nature of critical and creative thinking — emphasising the iterative nature of the process early in the document would be valuable
- the inclusion of “transferring knowledge into new contexts” is valued as the ability to transfer ideas and methods to new situations is a major source of creativity
- the examples assist significantly to clarify the appropriate level — without these some of the descriptions would seem beyond the level, e.g. Foundation and Year 8

Detail

- the emphasis on reflection recognises this as an important skill in this capability

Language

- is appropriate and provides indications of the sort of tasks that would support the development of the knowledge and skills required

Pitch

- is generally appropriate due to the openness of the descriptions

Progression

- is generally appropriate however the Foundation level descriptions need further clarity
- the progression is only made clear through the examples, e.g. the Year 6 and Year 8 descriptions for transferring knowledge

Useability

- the addition of descriptions for Foundation, Year 4 and Year 8 significantly improves the useability of the continuum.

5.2 Issues and concerns

The following issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- in the “Identifying, exploring and clarifying questions and issues” sub-element the Foundation descriptors should read “make statements about what happens in their immediate world” and the word “simple” should be included in the second description

Detail

- there is no emphasis on implementing critical and creative thinking as a course of action — students should be encouraged to implement and enact the designed course of action and this could be included in the “Drawing conclusions and designing a course of action” sub-element
- examples are needed to cover each description not just some content descriptions in some year levels

Language

- the terms: creative, new, novel, imaginative, innovative and inventive are not synonyms and need to be reconsidered when used to describe progression
- the term “prototyping” should be used when testing possible solutions
- much of the continuum is dominated by Mathematics and Science problem-oriented descriptions rather than response-based descriptions — this can be seen with the recurring use of language such as “problem”, “solution”, “test” and “procedures”, which are limiting and will not apply to all learning areas or creative tasks
- the second set of descriptors for the “Applying logical and inventive reasoning” sub-element lack some coherence — there should be a common terminology developed such as “decision making”
- the language used in Year 6 and Year 8 “Evaluating and Reflecting” sub-element may narrow the context to technology design
- the term “inventive reasoning” should be replaced with “critical”
- the term “sources” is used but not explained

Pitch

- the description and detail for Foundation is too abstract to provide clarity and the descriptions in “Imagining possibilities and considering alternatives” sub-element are limited

Progression

- the Foundation level descriptors lack some coherence with the rest of the continuum and have a definite “add on” feel
- there is not always a clear progression of skills for all sub-elements and at times the expectations across the levels do not link:
 - “tolerate ambiguities...” is only found in the Year 8 “Seeking and creating innovative pathways and solutions” sub-element but this is a key aspect of creative thinking at all levels — progression is in the number or degree of ambiguities that can be tolerated
 - “investigate possibilities and potential innovations through creative examples” in *Generating innovative ideas and possibilities* strand for Year 8 does not fit with other descriptions in that strand

Useability

- the examples in Foundation and Year 2 are confusing and may not help direct teachers’ decisions for planning
- the use of “analogies” is important and useful for Foundation to Year 2
- although it is useful that the descriptions are kept broad for usability in different learning areas, some descriptions are too vague

Way forward

- Revise the language usage to make it more consistent. In particular, there is mixed use of the terms creativity, imagination, innovation, invention and problem-solving (or some derivative of them), often as though they are synonymous. These terms differ in meaning and should not be used interchangeably. Defining creativity in a very clear manner and then using “creativity” and “creative thinking” consistently will ensure continuity and prevent confusion. According to research, creativity is about an individual or group developing an idea, product, performance or method that is both novel and appropriate/valuable/useful, as defined within the relevant context.
- Review the definitions. Definitions and concepts are not always universally agreed; however, some simple, research-informed definitions that could guide decisions about definitions are suggested below:
 - **New/Novel:** Something that did not previously exist (for students, something is new to them if it did not previously exist to the best of their knowledge, even if someone else has thought of it without them knowing). Something can be new/novel without being appropriate/useful/valuable.
 - **Creative:** Outcomes (ideas, products, methods or performances) that are novel and also appropriate/useful/valuable for the context (e.g. by adapting, synthesising or transferring existing outcomes).
 - **Imaginative:** Ideas or possibilities that can be fanciful and not necessarily based on, or limited by, reality. Imaginative ideas do not necessarily have a purpose or application.
 - **Innovative:** Commonly conceived as alterations to an existing product/method to generate a creative tangible product/method. Innovations are often associated with commercial value and used in the domains of technology or science, but less commonly in humanities or the arts.
 - **Inventive:** Usually refers to a creative method or tangible product that is useful for meeting a demand or solving a problem (must manifest in something tangible and not just remain as an idea). Inventions have connotations of being more original than innovations, with the novelty produced through more than just a simple adaptation or alteration of an existing outcome. Not necessarily commercial.
- Revise the strand names. Based on creativity research, the following suggestions for changes in strand names will reduce the Science/Mathematics bias, link to creativity more appropriately across all learning areas, reduce inconsistency in language use, and add the missing focus areas of creativity. Consider changing:
 - “Identifying, exploring and clarifying questions and issues” to “Identifying, exploring and clarifying questions, issues, needs or wants”
 - “Gathering, organising and processing information” to “Gathering, organising, analysing and evaluating existing information and sources”
 - “Identifying possibilities and considering alternatives” to “Imagining possibilities and considering alternative representations of ideas”
 - “Seeking and creating innovative pathways and solutions” to “Seeking and generating creative pathways and outcomes”
 - “Reflecting on thinking, probing assumptions, and self-correction” to “Reflecting on thinking, probing assumptions, self-correction, and goal-setting”
 - “Evaluating and reflecting on procedures and outcomes” to “Evaluating and reflecting on processes and outcomes”
 - “Applying logical and inventive reasoning” to “Applying logical and critical reasoning”
 - “Drawing conclusions and designing a course of action” to “Drawing conclusions, and designing and implementing a course of action”.

6 Personal and social capability learning continuum

6.1 Strengths

The following strengths were identified.

Detail

- the continuum is grounded in theory and there is comprehensive coverage of the elements of personal and social capability which will align with many schools' social and emotional learning or pastoral care programs
- the focus on “self-worth” rather than “self-esteem” is valued

Language

- is user friendly and easy to understand, and further clarity has been developed by the addition of descriptions for Foundation, Year 4 and Year 8

Useability

- the descriptors are linked to values education, the Melbourne Declaration and the Student with Disabilities draft curriculum as well as the Ethical Behaviour and Intercultural Understanding general capabilities.

6.2 Issues and concerns

The following issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- the structure of multiple sub-elements takes away the big-picture focus of what students should demonstrate and this could make it difficult to spread learning across learning areas
- there is a lack of connectedness across the “Self-knowledge” sub-element

Detail

- decision making is a critical skill in this capability and needs to be given greater emphasis

Progression

- the “Confidence, resilience and adaptability” sub-element has two themes that are not consistent through all levels — “dealing with new situations” (explicit in Foundation and Year 10 only); and “showing persistence adaptability in challenging tasks” (not explicit in Foundation).

Way forward

- Increase the focus on decision-making and actions.
- Add to “Appropriate expression of emotions” sub-element, students being able to moderate their emotions to be appropriate for the situation.
- Begin the focus on accepting responsibility in the “Appropriate expression of emotions” sub-element earlier than Year 10 as this is a strength.
- Consistently clarify the contexts in which leadership is expected in the “Leadership” sub-element.

7 Ethical Behaviour learning continuum

7.1 Strengths

The following strengths were identified.

Clarity

- the inclusion of examples for most descriptors provide clarity and detail for the continuum

Detail

- the level of detail is appropriate and describes different aspects of ethical behaviour, including values, rights, responsibilities, and how these affect decision-making and behaviour
- the inclusion of ethics, values, rights and decision-making is supported

Language

- is user friendly and further clarity has been developed by the addition of descriptions for Foundation, Year 4 and Year 8

Progression

- a clear progression of how ethical behaviour can be explored at different junctures

Useability

- the ethical concepts are left quite broad and this will allow schools to teach ethics that align with their philosophy and/or belief system.

7.2 Issues and concerns

The following issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- the key terms are not clearly defined, e.g. the notions of “ethical concepts” and “ethical issues” require an example at each phase description to show the changes from phase to phase
- the examples are not sufficient to discriminate between each phase and would be better served with access to comprehensive definitions of key terms
- some descriptions read more like teacher activities or elaborations than the expectations of the students as they develop, e.g. the Foundation description for the “Conscience and ethics” sub-element reads “use examples from stories and experiences to discuss the meaning of having a conscience”
- the wording of many descriptors is based around the cognitive progression of students rather than development in understanding and enactment of behaviours associated with ethics
- there is not a clear focus on exploring how what is considered “ethical” or “unethical” behaviour can differ according to context — while there are some ethics that are generally considered “universal”, e.g. the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this is not always the case, e.g. what is considered “fair” in different cultures can greatly differ

Detail

- a broader reference to relationships with the world and global issues in the 21st Century is needed
- some descriptions do not contain sufficient detail to assist teachers to determine the necessary knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions from the description alone
- a greater emphasis on the human rights and the universality of rights in the *Understanding ethical concepts and issues* strand is needed
- in the “Rights and responsibilities” sub-element, Year 4 is limited to “visual and media reproductions” while authentic and practical situations are ignored

Language

- all examples need to be carefully reviewed for their inclusivity and social subtexts
- there is slippage in terminology throughout the continuum especially in the terms that describe the action or student requirement, e.g. the use of “name” in ethical concepts rather than “identify” as used in other elements of the general capability
- the term “test” should be removed from the Year 6 “Conscience and ethics” and “Personal Behaviours and decision-making” sub-elements — these are not demonstrable

Pitch

- some of the descriptions in the “Ethical Concepts” sub-element are too simplistic
- the influence of context on ethics should be built into the Year 4 “Exploring points of views” sub-element

Progression

- an underpinning framework for building ethical behaviours needs to be more evident in how the descriptors in the continuum progress
- the term “justice” is not mentioned until Year 10 and only mentioned once in the “Ethical concepts” sub-element
- there is confusion between the levelness of the Foundation descriptions and the Year 2 descriptions — at times these seem to be at the same level or incorrectly placed, e.g. the descriptions for “Ethical issues in context” sub-element and the first three phases of “Personal behaviours and decision making” sub-element are almost identical due to the similarity of the content at each phase
- in the “Principles and values” sub-element there is not a clear progression in understanding from the Year 2 to Year 4 descriptions

Useability

- some terminology used will not assist teachers in their capacity to be immediately aware of the differences from one phase to the next, e.g. the difference between “analyse” at Year 8 and “critically analyse” in Year 10 in the descriptions for “The role of rules and laws” sub-element.

Way forward

- Review to ensure all terms are clearly defined and the structure is clear.
- Check terminology for internal consistency within the continuum. Descriptions that are of similar cognitive demand in the continuum should use the same terminology to assist teachers to understand the expectations.
- Review and rewrite descriptions to ensure they are about the development of the student in regards to the general capability.
- Add a greater focus, particularly in Years 7–10, on exploring how ethics, values, rights and responsibilities can differ according to the context (e.g. country, religion, culture, period in time), with a focus on both similarities and differences and potential reasons/origins of these beliefs.
- Revise the “Exploring points of view” sub-element to read:
 - Year 2: “recognise that there may be many points of view when probing ethical issues and identify some alternative views that differ from their own”
 - Year 4: “identify the many possible points of view associated with an ethical issue and possible reasons for these differences in views”
 - Year 6 to Year 10: “use reasoning skills to evaluate the relative merits of different points of view in ethical issues and how views can differ according to the context”.
- Add a more global focus particularly from Year 5/6 onwards. At this time students should be encouraged to think beyond local situations.
- Replace the word, “test” with “evaluate” in the Year 6 “Personal behaviours and decision making” sub-element. Testing the consequences of behaviours in real settings could be misinterpreted as it could imply carrying out these scenarios. However, one could argue it is unethical for students to actually test out the example situation, for instance, where a student is excluded from a game — this could potentially have negative effects on the excluded student.
- Consider using the same type of examples across the junctures to demonstrate more clearly the desired development of ethical behaviours.

8 Intercultural understanding learning continuum

8.1 Strengths

The following strengths were identified.

Detail

- the continuum is comprehensive with consideration of a wide range of issues related to intercultural understanding and the addition of descriptions for Foundation, Year 4 and Year 8 has enhanced this

Useability

- the examples for most descriptions are valued and will provide a useful basis from which teachers could determine suitable learning experiences
- the descriptors have useful links to the Ethical Behaviour continuum
- in general, this capability recognises many opportunities for students to engage with, explore, negotiate with and advocate for other cultures.

8.2 Issues and concerns

The following issues and concerns were identified.

Clarity

- the definitions of cultures and cultural groups are unclear — cultures and cultural groups range from other members of a class (i.e. subcultures) to people belonging to local, national and international groups with distinct identities, beliefs and customs

Detail

- some descriptions lack clarity, e.g. in the *Respect* strand in the “For cultural diversity” sub-element at Foundation level, it is unclear how a student may respond “positively” to a concept or issue
- there is repetition and a lot of cross-over among the sub-elements — perhaps these could be synthesised and reduced, e.g. the sub-elements “Culture and identity” and “Cultural comparison” overlap
- in some areas there is a lack of alignment between the different levels of the continuum — the description at one level differs markedly from the following levels, e.g. in *Interacting* strand and the “Developing mutual understanding” sub-element. the examples provided do not always clearly align with the description of the level and the continuum, e.g. in the *Interacting* strand and the “Developing mutual understanding” sub-element there are a wide variety of activities that are not clearly linked
- some examples do not always match the descriptions, e.g. “Developing multiple perspectives” sub-element:
 - at Foundation the example does not clearly match the description as students can play different games but still with children who are similar to them
 - at Year 4 the description relates to “cultural groups” and the example mentions “sports teams”

Pitch

- in some descriptors, the Foundation level exceeds what is reasonable, e.g. the *Respect* strand and the Year 8 descriptors are pitched higher than the Year 10 — the consistent use of terms could assist in improving the pitch and progression
- in the “On the impact of stereotypes and prejudice” sub-element:
 - Year 8 students should be encouraged to think beyond just the Australian context which might be specified in Year 4
 - Year 6 students are also capable of reflecting on international issues but no context is specified
- in the *Empathy* strand within the “Identifying with the experiences of others” sub-element:
 - Foundation: “consideration” should be added to “concern”
 - Year 2: “persuade” should be replaced with “encourage”
 - Year 6 and 8 students are asked to consider and imagine others’ situations, experiences or motivations but it is problematic to expect students to identify with these if they are outside students’ realm of experience
 - Year 10 describes “considering the effects of their actions on others” — this should be considered well before this year level
- in the *Responsibility* strand within the “Resisting stereotypes and prejudice” sub-element for Foundation, being willing to demonstrate something to others is not synonymous with including others

Progression

- in the “Culture and identity” sub-element there needs to be consistency throughout the levels, e.g. some levels mention membership in groups, with only the Year 8 description specifying “cultural” groups
- in the “Developing multiple perspectives” sub-element culture is not mentioned at the Foundation and Year 8, but is in all other junctures — this needs to be consistent

Useability

- many of the descriptors assume teachers’ knowledge of intercultural understanding in the descriptions and exposure to other cultural groups which not all schools will have.

Way forward

- Clarify the definitions of cultures and cultural groups which would assist in sharpening the examples provided, e.g. in the *Interacting* strand within the “Understanding communication” sub-element, this varies from the school community to cultural texts.
- Add examples for every description at every level — some are missing. The examples need to be more explicit if they are local, regional, national or global which would make it easier for teachers to work with and also to identify resources.
- Synthesise and integrate concepts to reduce the amount of content.
- Revise the *Reflecting* strand, “On the experiences of others” sub-element to emphasis respect — they should be closely interconnected:
 - Foundation and Year 2 level: “reflect on **and appreciate**”
 - Year 4: “demonstrate an understanding **and appreciation**”
 - Year 6: “accept that their point of view is one among many and begin to see **and respect how others might see particular** experiences”
 - Year 8: “understand **and respect**”
 - Year 10: “demonstrate open-mindedness **and respect**”.
- Revise the *Empathy* strand, “Showing concern and making choices” sub-element to also include how making choices should be reflected in action, for example:
 - Year 4: “understand that all children have the right to feel included and safe at school and in the community **and make choices that support this right**”
 - Year 6: “recognise that their decisions, choices and actions impact on others **and demonstrate actions that acknowledge this impact**”
 - Year 8 and 10 also need some link to evidence of students making choices and actions that demonstrate the qualities of empathy.
- Similarly, the *Respect* strand, “For cultural diversity” sub-element, demonstration or action should be included:
 - Year 8: “acknowledge the importance of **and demonstrate** mutual respect to promote exchange and collaboration in an interconnected **world**”
 - Year 10: “understand the importance of, **and contribute to**, maintaining cultural traditions ...”

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