

Time allocations and entitlement

Implementing the Australian Curriculum F(P)–10

July 2011

This paper is part of the QSA implementation plan for 2011–13 published in May 2011, which supports Queensland’s transition to the Australian Curriculum (see: www.qsa.qld.edu.au/9188.html).

The paper outlines the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) guidelines for time allocations and required learning areas. The advice on time allocations for Queensland schools is based on information available in July 2011. The advice may be subject to change and does not represent mandatory requirements for Queensland schools.

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1 Background

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0^{*} (December 2010) states that the Australian Curriculum:

- specifies what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling (p. 9)
- is designed to be taught well within the overall teaching time and with the resources available to teachers and students (p. 9)
- will be written with the expectation that some learning areas will be taught in each year of schooling from Foundation (Prep) to Year 10. For other areas, it will describe an entitlement that students will have the opportunity to learn across Foundation to Year 8 (p. 9).

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0 also makes clear that “specific decisions” remain to be made about:

- the entitlement
- the opportunities for additional learning
- who will determine what each student will have the opportunity to learn at different phases of schooling (p. 11 and p. 13).

Education ministers for each state and territory intend to settle these matters in July 2011 and this will be reflected in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 3.0*.

2 Purpose

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) discusses proposed indicative times in the context of an overarching framework. The framework includes the learning areas described in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008).[†]

To inform Queensland’s position on time allocations and the scope of entitlement for students at different phases of schooling, this paper considers:

- shape papers for the Australian Curriculum and the learning areas
- information given at various forums
- meeting papers.

The paper outlines four key issues and the assumptions which underpin them. It also offers advice that school sectors can use for presenting information and developing advice for schools.

The paper was written in collaboration with school sectors and presents a position based on available information in July 2011 (and is subject to change).

^{*} Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2010, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0*, ACARA, <www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum.pdf>.

[†] Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2008, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, MCEETYA, <www.mceecdy.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf>.

3 Key issues

School sectors, schools and teachers are seeking clear advice about time allocations and learning area requirements to inform their timetabling decisions as they prepare to implement the Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics and science in 2012.

To date, all time allocations provided by ACARA have been described as a tool to support curriculum writers when shaping curriculum content. This has been complicated by the inclusion of time allocations at different phases of schooling in the most recent shape papers for the arts, geography and languages.

Schools have tended to interpret any reference to time allocation as timetable time. However, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0* refers to ACARA's *Curriculum Design Paper v2.0* (November 2009) and states that:

School authorities make decisions about the allocation of time and other resources.
(p. 9)

This is restated:

Such an approach is not designed to establish time allocations for education systems and sectors, schools or teachers.
(p. 17)

ACARA maintains that:

- indicative times show the relative emphasis of learning areas across the stages of schooling, such as:
 - the priority to develop literacy and numeracy competence in the early years
 - the increasing emphasis on all eight learning areas in Years 3–8 culminating in Years 7–8
 - the inclusion of more opportunities for students to choose learning pathways in Years 9–10
- the Australian Curriculum should not exceed 80% of the available teaching time
- time percentages are broad guidelines for curriculum writers and represent a minimum time that each learning area requires
- further decisions about time allocations should be made by school sectors and individual schools.

3.1 Teaching hours per year

Since July 2010, ACARA has discussed possibilities for representing indicative time allocations to inform an overarching framework for the Australian Curriculum.

In these discussions, the draft indicative time allocations were based on an assumption that there are 1000 hours of teaching time per year (i.e. 25 hours per week over 40 weeks per year). This showed that the Australian Curriculum could account for different amounts of time, depending on the stage of schooling. For example:

- F(Prep)–Year 2 — approximately 72%
- Years 3–6 — approximately 79%
- Years 7–8 — approximately 80%
- Years 9–10 — approximately 49%.

The development of advice for schools in Queensland will need to take into account the actual number of teaching weeks available. Based on a sample of Queensland schools across the three sectors it may be more realistic to consider a typical school year as being between 35 weeks and 40 weeks depending on the year level. This takes into consideration the impact of:

- public holidays (five–six days depending on the region)
- student-free days (five days)
- NAPLAN testing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (three days)
- different year levels finishing the school year at different times, e.g. some Year 10 students finish two weeks earlier
- start and finish dates for boarding schools and remote schools
- days for religious celebrations, sports carnivals and National Sorry Day
- schooling sector priorities (including accreditation requirements and processes for non-state schools).

3.2 Discretionary time

The amount of discretionary or “unallocated” time will be a minimum of 20%. This reflects ACARA’s position that the Australian Curriculum will take no more than 80% of the teaching time available in schools, with the proportion peaking in Years 7 and 8 and reducing significantly in Years 9 and 10 as core expectations are reduced. See the advice provided on allocated and unallocated time in Tables 1 and 2 (on page 9 of this paper).

In Queensland, students engage in a vast range of activities that make up the remainder of the school curriculum. These activities include:

- general administration, e.g. awards nights, end-of-year events, fire evacuation and lockdown practices
- policies and priorities, e.g. Smart Moves, apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships, work experience, SET planning
- systemic assessment, e.g. NAPLAN testing and practice, QCST preparation
- religious education, e.g. masses
- pastoral care, e.g. home room and care groups
- extra-curricular activities, e.g. interschool and GPS sports, school musicals, instrumental programs, choir practice, clubs
- other, e.g. swimming and athletics carnivals, open days, fetes and fundraising, excursions and camps, grandparent days, and parenting programs.

It should also be acknowledged that, in the early years, time is required to actually move children around the school and settle them in different activities.

From a sample of Queensland schools across the three sectors, most felt that 20% was adequate for activities making up the unallocated time. However, some felt that as much as 30% was more realistic for their current timetable.

A key issue for Queensland schools is whether the unallocated time at the different year levels is sufficient for the variety of activities routinely included in the curriculum.

3.3 Balance

School sectors, schools and teachers have raised concerns about how time allocations could influence balance in the overall curriculum. Where Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) was previously one learning area, it is now a humanities and social sciences learning area that includes content descriptions and achievement standards for four separate subjects — history, geography, civics and citizenship, and economics and business. Similarly, the technologies learning area now includes two subjects — information and communication technologies (ICT) and design and technology.

When considering time allocations it will be important to note the aggregated times for all the subjects in humanities and social sciences and technologies to determine balance across the curriculum.

3.4 The entitlement

The scope of the Australian Curriculum is eight learning areas, seven general capabilities and three cross-curriculum priorities. In *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 2.0*, ACARA states that the Australian Curriculum has been written to:

... focus on an entitlement for all students. As a result, the curriculum will articulate what is expected for all students to learn as well as articulating additional learning options.
(p.11)

ACARA also states that:

For some learning areas, the Australian Curriculum will be written with the expectation that they will be taught in each year of schooling from Foundation to Year 10. For other areas, the Australian Curriculum will describe an entitlement that students will have the opportunity to learn across Foundation to Year 8, as well as additional learning they may choose and/or schools may choose to provide in Years 9–10.
(p. 9)

To accommodate the varying emphases, the learning areas are in two broad groups:

- learning areas taught to all students in each year of F(Prep)–Year 10: English, mathematics, science, history, health and physical education
- learning areas taught to all students but not necessarily in each year of F(Prep)–Year 8 and where the teaching of the curriculum is optional in Years 9–10: the arts, geography, business and economics, civics and citizenship, technologies, and languages. (The arrangements for these learning areas are to be confirmed following consultation on the relevant shape papers.)

In this way, ACARA has set an “entitlement” but acknowledges that the Australian Curriculum does not make assumptions about how the curriculum will be delivered in schools. This is ultimately the responsibility of schools acting within jurisdictional requirements.

Table 1 (on page 9 of this paper) represents:

- the “entitlement” using shading
- the languages learning area, shaded with diagonal lines. This indicates flexibility about when language learning can begin and demonstrates a focus on developing proficiency.

Decisions need to be made about Queensland’s position on mandating learning areas in Years F(P)–8 and Years F(P)–10 and in special education settings.

4 Conclusion

The investigation of time allocation and the entitlement has identified the following key issues that should inform the development of advice for schools.

- What constitutes a school year and, hence, the available teaching time?
- Does the amount of unallocated time realistically meet the time required for schools to continue to offer their curriculum (that is, using the QSA definition that curriculum is the sum total of the teaching and learning in classrooms and other learning environments)?
- How can schools ensure balance across the curriculum and cover all components of the learning areas?
- What is the advice is about entitlement?

Appendix — Advice on time allocations

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has discussed proposed indicative times in the context of an overarching framework that includes the learning areas described in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008). To date, all references to time allocations that have been provided by ACARA have been described as a tool to support curriculum writers when shaping the curriculum content.

Table 1 (on page 9) has been developed in collaboration with the school sectors as a starting point for discussions about timetabling decisions. It is provided as advice and is not intended to be a mandate for schools.

The advice is based on information available in July 2011 and includes indicative times for learning areas which have not been developed. The advice may change as decisions about the Australian Curriculum learning areas are finalised.

Further advice will be provided by the school sectors.

Time allocations

Table 1 presents a range of times expressed as hours per year that should provide reasonable flexibility. The hours provided in the table are presented as two minimums that take account of the activities that impact on the available teaching time, basing the number of available hours for:

- F(Prep)–Year 9 on 37–40 weeks
- Year 10 on 35–38 weeks.

These minimums are based upon the emerging Australian Curriculum and provide a guideline for schools taking into account the variation of weeks per school year. They do not assume how schools should organise the learning; schools may decide to cover more hours of a learning area.

Languages learning area

The languages learning area is shaded with diagonal lines. This indicates flexibility about when languages learning can begin, and demonstrates a focus on developing proficiency.

School sectors will provide further advice about languages learning when the Australian Curriculum for languages is developed.

Entitlement

Table 1 shows entitlement as shaded areas. Those learning areas which are not shaded indicate that study will be optional. If the learning area is offered, the curriculum will be developed using the Australian Curriculum content descriptions and achievement standards.

Table 1: Advice on time allocations to aid timetabling decisions

Learning area		Hours per year over 37–40 weeks per year					35–38 wks/yr 10
		P–2	3–4	5–6	7–8	9	
English		250–270	203–220	185–200	111–120	111–120	105–114
Mathematics		166–180	166–180	148–160	111–120	111–120	105–114
Science		37–40	64–70	64–70	92–100	111–120	105–114
Health & PE		74–80	74–80	74–80	74–80	74–80	70–76
Humanities & Social Science	History	18–20	37–40	37–40	46–50	46–50	43–48
	Geography	18–20	37–40	37–40	46–50	46–50	43–48
	Economics & business			18–20	18–20	46–50	43–48
	Civics & citizenship		18–20	18–20	18–20	18–20	17–19
The Arts		37–40	46–50	46–50	74–80	74–80	70–76
Languages			46–50		74–80	74–80	70–76
Technologies	Design & technology	18–20	37–40	55–60	74–80	37–40	35–38
	ICT					37–40	35–38

Table 2: Total percentages of time allocations

	P–2	3–4	5–6	7–8	9	10
Total percentage of allocated time (approx.)	72%	72%	79%	79%	49% [‡]	49% [‡]
Total percentage of unallocated time (approx.)	28%	28%	21%	21%	51%	51%

[‡] Excludes elective options in Years 9–10

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