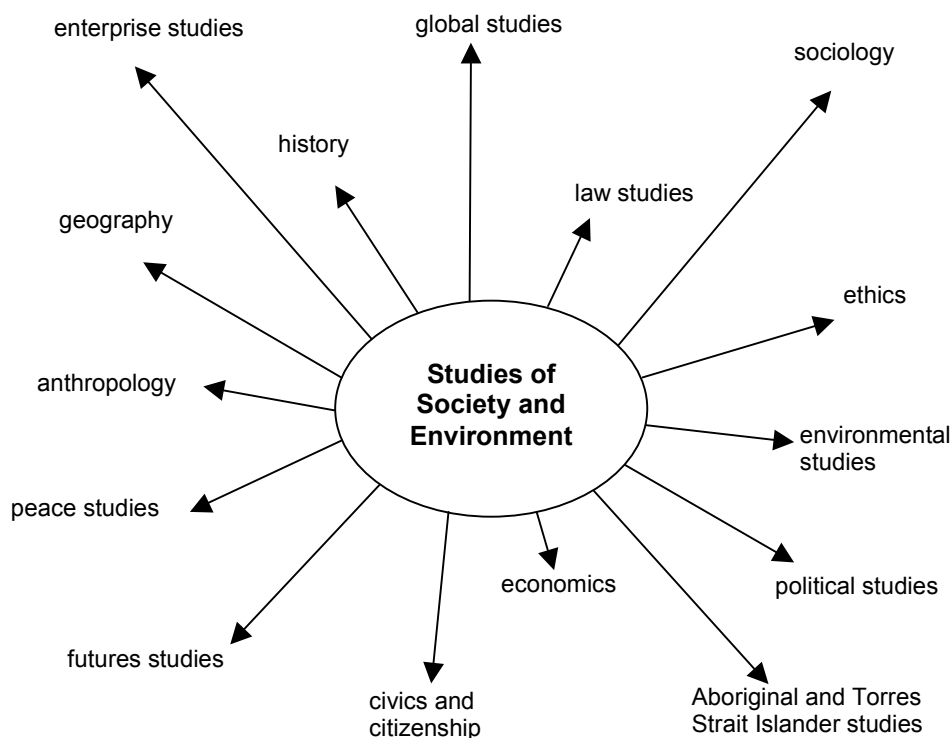# Studies of Society and Environment (2000)

Years 1 to 10
Sourcebook Guidelines
(Part 2 of 9)

Note: The PDF version of this document has been split into sections for easier download. This file is Part 2 of 9.

Queensland Government

Queensland Studies Authority
Partnership and innovation

Nature of the key learning area

The Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment key learning area centres on human fascination with the way people interact with each other and with environments. The values, processes and concepts of Studies of Society and Environment are drawn from a range of disciplines and fields of study, including those shown in the following diagram.

enterprise studies

global studies

sociology

history

law studies

geography

ethics

anthropology

Studies of Society and Environment

environmental studies

peace studies

economics

political studies

futures studies

civics and citizenship

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies

Disciplines and fields of study from which Studies of Society and Environment concepts are drawn

Key values of Studies of Society and Environment

The key values of Studies of Society and Environment are:
- democratic process
- social justice
- ecological and environmental sustainability
- peace.

These values are crucial to social and environmental inquiry and may also become the topics of inquiry. These values function as:
- concepts to be studied and critiqued
- guides for the selection of topics
- evaluative criteria during investigations
- components of learning outcomes.

Students study how values have been and can be used, defined and debated, both in abstract terms and in real contexts in a range of places, past and present. These values are not 'taught'. Rather, students are encouraged to think about the definitions of these values and to discuss the pros and cons of these definitions when applied to real-life and abstract contexts. Students are encouraged to develop an appreciation of the different perspectives people have on values and value issues and how cultural and other differences can influence these perspectives. They are also encouraged to develop an understanding of how certain value issues have been perennial concerns for people across cultures, space and time and will continue to be important issues in their own futures.

Democratic process

The key value of democratic process is based on a belief in the integrity and rights of all people. It promotes the ideals of equal participation and access for all individuals and groups.

In the Western, British tradition, understanding and applying the value of democratic process often leads, for example, to community involvement, active citizenship, a willingness to negotiate with others and respect the rights of others and a commitment to free, open and inclusive ways of making decisions. Exploring this value assists students to develop an understanding and acceptance of their responsibilities and obligations, including respect for others, a willingness to participate in decision making, a commitment to act ethically on the basis of reason and an acceptance of majority/consensus decisions. Older students may explore the tensions that exist between these responsibilities. These values also involve the role-modelling of democratic processes.

Exploring the value of democratic process involves understanding, reflecting on and perhaps applying concepts such as:

- constitutional government
- equal rights
- equality before the law
- freedom of conscience
- freedom of movement
- freedom of speech
- individual freedom
- minority rights
- participatory democracy
- political choice
- representative democracy
- right to vote
- social obligation
- social responsibility
- tolerance.

Social justice

The key value of social justice is important in maintaining a just society. It is based on a belief that all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment and a fair allocation of community resources. The syllabus says that the key value of social justice 'seeks to challenge the inequalities inherent in social institutions and structures and to deconstruct dominant views of society'. This means that as students develop, test and apply their understandings of social justice they will first learn to identify inequalities and views that are dominant within society. Students will then learn to deconstruct or analyse those dominant views. For example, when students are studying the Federation era in Australia, they could use parliamentary speeches and other primary sources to identify the dominant attitudes at that time towards particular groups in society and how these views affected these groups over time.

A diverse range of ideas about justice exist across different cultures; some place more emphasis on the individual, while others place more emphasis on the group or community. Because of the multicultural nature of Australian society, this diversity is extremely significant and requires careful consideration.

In Studies of Society and Environment, students explore and debate the ways in which social justice can be defined and practised in various communities, cultures and societies. This will involve understanding, reflecting on and perhaps applying concepts such as:

- anti-racism
- anti-sexism
- contractual obligations
- cultural sustainability
- disadvantage
- discrimination
- equity and equality
- fair wage
- fairness to others
- hierarchy
- human welfare
- respect for diversity
- social cohesion
- social rights
- social wellbeing.

Ecological and economic sustainability

The key value of ecological and economic sustainability examines the interrelationship between ecological systems and economies. It acknowledges the integrity of natural environments and their importance as the basic sources of life support and promotes the wise, equitable and sustainable use of resources.

Ecological and economic sustainability recognises that ecological and economic systems are interdependent. Economic systems are sustainable when they cater for human needs and maintain the integrity of natural environments.

Ecological and economic sustainability involves acting ethically towards the environment by establishing and maintaining social, political and economic structures that are focused on finding quality of life in a world of limits. This value applies to how we inhabit the Earth and treat all forms of life, how we manage resources and how we produce, distribute and consume goods and services.

Exploring the value of ecological and economic sustainability involves understanding, reflecting on and perhaps applying concepts such as:

- biological diversity
- capital
- conservation
- creativity
- ecological integrity
- economic growth
- economic resources
- efficiency
- enterprise
- heritage
- initiative
- intergenerational equity
- marketability
- price
- productivity
- scarcity
- standard of living
- stewardship
- sustainability
- wilderness values.

Peace

The value of peace is based on the promotion of positive relations with others and with the environment. This implies the need to maintain and develop hope, optimism, a sense of belonging to local, national and global communities, cooperative and peaceful relations with others and a sense of a shared destiny and custody of the Earth.

Peace applies to how we relate to other people and to environments, how we regard the spiritual dimension of life and how we envision desirable futures. Exploring the value of peace involves understanding, reflecting on and perhaps applying concepts such as:

- anti-discrimination
- anti-racism
- anti-sexism
- care for self and others
- consensus
- cooperation
- empathy
- honesty
- hope
- interdependence
- moral integrity
- non-violence
- optimism
- peace
- respect for life
- respect for self and others
- safety and security
- sensitivity
- tolerance
- trust.

Processes of social and environmental inquiry

The processes of social and environmental inquiry in Studies of Society and Environment derive from the disciplines and fields of study that inform the strands in which the outcomes are organised. These disciplines and fields of study each apply traditions of inquiry — gathering, representing and analysing information. These traditions underpin the processes of Studies of Society and Environment. Inquiry is a key means by which students learn to participate in social life as active and informed citizens and gain an understanding of their society and environments. As a result, inquiry processes are an integral, not an additional, dimension of Studies of Society and Environment.

There is no single inquiry model in Studies of Society and Environment. Rather, a range of inquiry models is promoted, including social investigation strategy, action research, historical inquiry and integrating socially. These models involve:
- formulating and examining questions, hypotheses and issues relevant to students' lives
- selecting and developing methods of investigation
- interpreting, analysing and evaluating information and issues
- selecting and formulating forms of presentation and communication
- planning a response or action
- phased, recursive, reflective investigations that rely heavily on evidence.

Inquiry-based learning in Studies of Society and Environment stresses the active role of students in terms of effective learning. The teacher's role includes motivating students and raising their awareness of complexities, alternative perspectives and other options for action and information. Teachers also assist students to understand how and when to apply knowledges.

Inquiry involves using a range of primary and secondary sources. Students will examine information in written, verbal, statistical, pictorial, graphic, visual and electronic forms. They will also analyse cultural artefacts of various sorts and engage in observations of and interviews with people.

The five key processes of the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area — investigating, creating, participating, communicating and reflecting — provide the basis for inquiries. These processes as they relate to the core learning outcomes are detailed in the syllabus.

These five key processes are derived from various disciplines and studies and relate to those in Board of Senior Secondary School Studies social science subjects in the senior secondary school.

Concepts of Studies of Society and Environment

The concepts of the *Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Syllabus* are drawn from a range of disciplines and fields of study and organised into four conceptual strands. Five key concepts underpin each strand and are the organisers for the core learning outcomes:

Time, Continuity and Change
- evidence over time
- changes and continuities
- people and contributions
- causes and effects
- heritage

Place and Space	• human–environment relationships • processes and environments • stewardship • spatial patterns • significance of place
Culture and Identity	• cultural diversity • cultural perceptions • belonging • cultural change • construction of identities
Systems, Resources and Power	• interactions between ecological and other systems • economy and business • participation and decision making • citizenship and government • access to power

Core content

The primary tools for planning learning and assessment activities are the core learning outcomes. The core content of the *Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Syllabus* is derived directly from the core learning outcomes and is written in terms of the key concepts of the strands. The core content described in the syllabus contains examples of specific content. These examples are not mandatory.

Students will engage with the core content when they are provided with opportunities to demonstrate the core learning outcomes in the syllabus. The specific contexts or content used to engage students in these broad concepts will vary according to local context.

Topic categories

Within core content, particular topic categories have been identified as having importance for Queensland students. These have been identified through state, national and international research. Referred to as core content topics, they are:
• Australia
• regions of the world, particularly the Asia-Pacific region
• Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures
• civics and citizenship
• natural, social and built environments
• globalisation
• media
• relationships
• cultural diversity
• work
• gender.

The core content topics are included in all four strands of Studies of Society and Environment. To ensure that students engage with these topics at increasingly sophisticated levels, they are included in the core learning outcomes in each band of schooling. That is, each core content topic is developed in Levels 1 or 2, Level 3, Level 4, and Levels 5 or 6. They may appear in different strands at different levels and may be linked. For example, media is linked with globalisation in learning outcome TCC 3.1 and with gender in learning outcome CI 4.3.

Education about work forms a significant part of Studies of Society and Environment. The processes, concepts and dispositions associated with work education in the Queensland School Curriculum Council's position paper on work education have been incorporated into the syllabus and sourcebook modules. National initiatives on enterprise education have also been incorporated in the syllabus and support materials.

The development of the Federal Government's *Discovering Democracy School Materials Project* on civics and citizenship education corresponded with that of the *Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Syllabus*, ensuring a compatibility between those materials and the levelness and nature of concepts in the learning outcomes.

Contribution of the key learning area to lifelong learning

The Queensland school curriculum is designed to assist students to become lifelong learners. The overall learning outcomes of the curriculum contain elements common to all key learning areas and collectively describe the valued attributes of a lifelong learner.

A lifelong learner is described as:
- a knowledgeable person with deep understanding
- a complex thinker
- a creative person
- an active investigator
- an effective communicator
- a participant in an interdependent world
- a reflective and self-directed learner.

The processes of Studies of Society and Environment offer particular support in promoting the attributes of a lifelong learner.

Cross-curricular priorities

The Studies of Society and Environment key learning area incorporates the cross-curricular priorities of literacy, numeracy, 'lifeskills' and a futures perspective.

Literacy

Literacy involves the ability to comprehend and compose spoken, written and visual texts that are commonly used by individuals and groups to participate critically and effectively in a wide range of life roles.

Studies of Society and Environment contributes to the development of student literacy throughout the compulsory years of schooling. Communicating is one of the processes emphasised in the key learning area. Students are involved in strategies to comprehend the meaning of words, symbols, pictures, diagrams, maps and other genre. By the end of Year 10, they will have investigated a range of media from different times and places and be accustomed to comprehending and composing in unfamiliar contexts. Studies of Society and Environment assists students to become culturally sensitive and capable of effective cross-cultural communication, primarily in Australian English. Students are encouraged to debate, persuade and explain in a variety of genre, including the artistic and technological. Students use models to demonstrate their interpretations of the major conceptual schema of Studies of Society and Environment. In their evaluations of qualitative and quantitative data they develop and demonstrate linguistic as well as basic numeracy skills.

Critical literacy plays an important role in the learning experiences of Studies of Society and Environment. Critical literacy involves an awareness of aspects in texts such as stereotyping, cultural bias, author's intention, hidden agendas and silent voices. It also involves an understanding of where the reader, viewer or user is positioned and who may have been marginalised by the creator of the text. Students as consumers of written, visual and interactive texts are encouraged to be aware that texts are constructed by people who have purposes for creating them and to make particular choices when doing so. As well as helping students to comprehend texts at a deeper level, critical literacy skills also assist students in the construction and reconstruction of their own texts. Students are encouraged to become critical consumers of texts, to view them from a variety of perspectives and to interpret the various levels of meaning.

A **multiliteracies** approach is a broad view of literacy. What we view as 'language' and how we 'use' it have undergone significant transformations in recent years. Local communities are becoming increasingly diverse in their linguistic, cultural and lifestyle characteristics, while larger societies and nations are being interconnected through economic globalisation which is made possible by advanced telecommunications technology. Linguistic, gestural, spatial, numerical, audio and visual modes have joined reading, writing and speaking as key systems of meaning-making which all play a part in Studies of Society and Environment, often in increasingly complex combinations. A multiliteracies approach in Studies of Society and Environment promotes access to and engagement in the evolving language of work, power and the community and will help to develop students' ability to design effective social futures.

Civic literacy plays an important role in the learning experiences of Studies of Society and Environment, by developing key concepts and processes that are related to the enactment of democracy and access to power. Civic literacy involves understanding a variety of perspectives on key democratic issues and knowing how to investigate current issues and develop creative and critical participation in community problem solving and decision making. Exercising civic rights and responsibilities is therefore a practical expression of important social values and requires specific personal, interpersonal and advocacy skills.

Numeracy

The promotion of **numeracy skills** within Studies of Society and Environment allows learners to solve problems related to their social, built and natural environments. The key learning area provides opportunities for students to:

- solve problems by collecting, organising and interpreting data
- collect data during project work (such as completing tables) and fieldwork (such as using compasses, clinometers, scattergrams and data proformas)
- organise, interpret and present data (using timelines, sequences, tables, databases, spreadsheets, graphs, maps and flow charts)
- find patterns and make inferences from numerical data such as temperature, resource distribution, population and demographic statistics and other information similar to that available from Australian Bureau of Statistics sources and maps
- translate data from one representation to another in order to display information and support points of view in a number of dimensional forms (such as diagrammatic representations, scale models, multimedia displays)
- use, interpret and construct alphanumeric and longitudinal/latitudinal grids to describe locations and to engage in mapping activities using scale, ratio and compass reference points
- critique statistical data for bias, reliability, accuracy, completeness and representativeness
- understand and use numerical reference systems used in libraries (such as the Dewey System) to locate and access materials.

Lifeskills

'Lifeskills' refers to a range of:
- personal development skills
- social skills
- self-management skills
- citizenship skills.

Studies of Society and Environment promotes lifeskills in a number of ways, particularly through the processes of investigating, creating, participating, communicating and reflecting. Studies of Society and Environment core content topics such as work, relationships, cultural diversity and civics and citizenship provide specific opportunities for students to develop lifeskills.

Lifeskills is a complex mixture of skills, knowledge, values and dispositions that will enable students to function in, critique and improve the world in which they live. In terms of the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area, lifeskills are promoted as students are involved in:

Growing and developing as an individual, including:
- becoming increasingly aware of personal growth and development
- using opportunities and personal abilities to exercise some influence over the direction and outcome of personal growth and development
- assuming increasing responsibility for personal growth and development bearing in mind that membership of various groups will present certain advantages and constraints.

Living with and relating to other people, including:
- living with and relating to people in a variety of family, social and cultural contexts
- displaying imaginative, creative, responsible and practical expressions of caring, sympathetic and empathetic relationships with other people
- expressing and managing a range of different emotions
- identifying, critically reflecting on and managing different ways of living and working in a multicultural and ever-changing society
- acting ethically by recognising and respecting the rights, needs and viewpoints of others
- working cooperatively with others and developing positive or pacifist strategies for cooperation and conflict resolution
- identifying, critically reflecting on and managing ways in which culture, race, gender, economic status and other factors help shape community values, standards of behaviour, work and welfare practices and policies
- developing confidence in relating to people in authority and power in various contexts and relating to disempowered people.

Managing resources, including:
- using time and abilities for personal enrichment and the benefit of the communities in which one lives
- developing an awareness of and respect for personal strengths and weaknesses
- addressing conservation issues and using natural resources wisely
- advocating for positive change as a result of identifying and challenging differential access and ability to benefit from available resources
- managing personal, family and/or community finances
- knowing how to seek and create both paid and unpaid work.

Receiving from and contributing to local, state, national and global communities, including:
- acquiring an increasing capacity to access, critique and shape the natural, social, economic, political, civic and spiritual resources within communities
- receiving positive and enriching experiences from communities of which they are a part
- contributing to the maintenance, renewal and/or change of the local, state, national and global communities of which they are a part.

Futures perspective

In dealing with the consequences of rapid change on environments and societies in recent decades, an attitude of optimism needs to be encouraged. Students need to develop an ability to envisage preferred social and environmental futures and to feel a sense of empowerment in shaping these futures. To achieve this, Studies of Society and Environment promotes a learning environment in which teachers are facilitators and students become increasingly responsible for decisions and operations.

For students, a 'futures perspective' involves developing and demonstrating practices and dispositions with a specific sense of possible alternatives and acting with a specific sense of a preferred future. A 'futures perspective', as incorporated in Studies of Society and Environment, is an approach to learning with an explicit view to exploring alternatives to current paradigms and ways of thinking. This is an alternative approach to preparing students for a future which may be uncertain, or allowing students to drift passively into a period of rapid change.

In education, futures studies is seen as the forward-looking equivalent of history. Many of the criteria applied to history — for example, coherence, compatibility with evidence and internal consistency of arguments — apply to futures. Those skilled in time studies will make excellent futurists.

Students of Studies of Society and Environment will engage in activities that develop the ability to:
- apply foresight
- appreciate consequences
- envision alternatives
- make informed choices
- take responsible action.