

Studies of Society and Environment (2000)

Years 1 to 10 Sourcebook Guidelines (Part 7 of 9)

Note: The PDF version of this document has been split into sections for easier download. This file is Part 7 of 9.

Planning for learning and assessment

The *Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Syllabus* provides a framework for planning learning and assessment activities through which students have opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do with what they know in the key learning area. Programs, units and activities are the main organisational structures for curriculum used in schools. Experiences that promote learning, and strategies for gathering information about that learning, are developed within these structures. Despite the common use of terms, the nature, extent, purpose and organisation of programs, units and activities differ widely depending on student needs, teacher expertise, the local context and school authority requirements.

This section provides advice that will support appropriate, effective and efficient planning for learning and assessment for the following:

- characteristics of worthwhile programs, units and activities
- program planning considerations
- unit planning considerations
- activity planning considerations
- planning assessment for demonstration of learning outcomes.

Advice is included on using the Studies of Society and Environment sourcebook modules to plan for student demonstrations of learning outcomes. This section also links to and draws on advice in the previous sections of the sourcebook guidelines and all sections of the initial in-service materials.

Characteristics of worthwhile programs, units and activities

Programs, units and activities that are consistent with the principles of the outcomes approach promoted in the syllabus should reflect:

- comprehensiveness
- promotion of self-reflection
- appropriateness
- sequence of units and activities within programs
- relevance and authenticity
- consideration of equity issues
- promotion of active learner involvement
- efficient and innovative use of resources
- policies.

Comprehensiveness

A comprehensive range of experiences should involve students in using a variety of processes for social and environmental learning and inquiry. Assessment will be comprehensive if it enables all students to demonstrate core learning outcomes.

Promotion of self-reflection

Activities that promote reflective and self-directed learning provide opportunities that enable students to monitor their own learning. These opportunities should be provided at relevant intervals to enable students to reflect on:

- what they have learned
- their strengths and weaknesses as learners
- their progress in demonstrating learning outcomes
- ways to improve their learning.

Appropriateness

Activities will be appropriate when they are suited to the developmental levels and learning styles of students. Teachers should provide students with experiences that represent realistic challenges and enable them to develop beyond their present levels of understanding. Appropriateness for all students requires that experiences be varied and, where necessary, individualised by providing extra scaffolding for the development of learning outcomes.

Sequence of units and activities within programs

The sequence of units and activities should allow time for students to investigate ideas and develop skills and understandings. It should also provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate learning outcomes. Students must be aware of the criteria for demonstrating learning outcomes and know how they are progressing in relation to them.

Consideration must be given to the balance of units and activities across the span of an overall Studies of Society and Environment program. Ideally, students should be provided with opportunities to participate in units and activities for each of the Studies of Society and Environment strands every year to ensure continuity of development of practices, skills and dispositions.

Relevance and authenticity

Programs, units and activities will be relevant and authentic when their content and contexts link with students' cultural, social or geographic background and prior understandings and allow them to construct new understandings. The interests and understandings of students should be determined prior to beginning activities. Relevant and authentic activities should also involve students in contexts that are engaging and enjoyable and that provide opportunities for them to negotiate curriculum.

Consideration of equity issues

Programs, units and activities in Studies of Society and Environment are equitable when they enable all students to access and participate in them. They must include and value the experiences and circumstances of all students. Worthwhile programs, units and activities promote knowledge, practices and dispositions regarding equity and provide a means of exploring and challenging equity issues in and through Studies of Society and Environment.

To ensure access and participation for all students, programs, units and activities should take into consideration the interrelationships between and among the cultural and linguistic backgrounds, socioeconomic circumstances, abilities, learning styles, disabilities, sexual identities, gender and geographic location of all students.

Programs, units and activities should promote supportive environments in which students:

- take care of and accept themselves as they grow and change
- value themselves as members of various groups
- identify the range of opinions expressed in the community on various issues and challenge the assumptions underlying community expectations
- develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to achieve effective relationships
- support and encourage one another as they engage in and reflect upon Studies of Society and Environment activities.

Programs, units and activities can include and value the experiences, backgrounds and circumstances of students by including:

- discussions on the range of individual and community values and beliefs and their implications
- evaluation of the consequences of translating value positions into practice
- engagement in critical evaluation and reflection
- participation in activities associated with a range of cultures, histories and languages.

To enhance students' exploration of equity issues in Studies of Society and Environment, programs, units and activities should:

- develop the skills of sourcing and critically analysing information to make informed decisions
- include participation in decision making and public debate
- take action on forms of inequity that affect access to resources and to a safe environment
- make explicit the fact that knowledge is historically, socially and culturally constructed.

Promotion of active learner involvement

Teachers should acknowledge and accommodate the prior experience and knowledge of students when planning activities. Students' constructions of meaning can be nurtured by providing ongoing opportunities for them to apply the knowledge, skills and understanding that they bring to new learning. Activities which emphasise the processes of investigating, creating, participating, communicating and reflecting should build on and challenge students' existing understandings. Sharing ideas and intellectual risk taking should be encouraged.

Efficient and innovative use of resources

Activities should make efficient, cost-effective and timely use of resources. It may be necessary to support demonstrations of outcomes with particular resources to cater for differences in learning needs. Where appropriate, students will be encouraged to use resources in innovative ways as they strive to demonstrate learning outcomes.

Policies

Activities should adhere to and observe any policies that apply to schools. These policies may relate to safety, social justice, pedagogy or other curriculum requirements.

Program planning considerations

Programs are used by teachers to structure planning for learning and demonstrations of learning outcomes over periods of time. The most effective starting-point for school-based planning for learning and assessment in Studies of Society and Environment is a whole-school program. Programs represent long-term plans, describing how units and activities contribute to the development of overall learning outcomes, key learning area outcomes, core learning outcomes and possibly discretionary learning outcomes of the Years 1 to 10 curriculum.

Programs should consider individual students or groups of students with specific needs. A Studies of Society and Environment program may be produced for students within a group, class, year level or whole school and may be integrated within or across one or more of the key learning areas.

Programs in Studies of Society and Environment will vary according to the philosophical, cultural, social and geographical contexts of the school, in addition to the physical and human resources of the school and local and wider communities. Planning should allow flexible delivery and integration across the curriculum where appropriate. The following considerations will impact on the way Studies of Society and Environment programs are planned:

- the individual school's approach to integration and complementary learning across the curriculum
- school timetable structure, such as a unitised curriculum
- primary school and secondary school settings
- P to 10 or P to 12 school structures
- multi-age classes
- rural and remote, and distance education settings
- one-teacher school organisation
- special schools
- special education units.

Whole-school programs

A school program can assist the implementation of Studies of Society and Environment by providing information such as:

- the range of learning outcomes associated with particular units and year levels
- when particular learning outcomes are expected to be demonstrated by most students
- the expected time needed for units
- how units relate to the attributes of a lifelong learner, cross-curricular priorities, equity considerations and the key learning area outcomes of Studies of Society and Environment
- how a series of units contribute toward the school's ethos, beliefs, mission statement and/or strategic plans
- the relationship of Studies of Society and Environment units to school assessment and reporting practices and policies
- how the program links to policies
- the relationship of the Studies of Society and Environment program to the needs of students
- access, use, management, equity and safety considerations associated with resources
- considerations related to school–community interactions
- considerations related to the physical and emotional safety of students
- considerations related to the benefits and limitations of the educational setting.

A program will allow schools to identify and evaluate organisational issues to ensure effective implementation of Studies of Society and Environment, for example:

- annual operational planning considerations, including monitoring and review processes
- budgeting
- professional development
- resource purchasing, access, use, management, inclusivity and safety
- human resource allocation
- timetabling
- review and development of school policies and procedures
- development of courses targeted to specific needs of students
- assessment and reporting practices at school and class level.

Whole-school programs may consist of discrete courses. Courses are planned sets of learning experiences and assessment opportunities that have a specified duration and location in a school's overall curriculum offering. Schools

may wish to develop courses to meet the needs of their students and community. Courses may have a particular focus, for example:

- courses supporting middle schooling
- a specialised implementation of a key learning area syllabus for particular year levels in a primary school
- a specialised implementation of a key learning area syllabus, perhaps in preparation for a subsequent course (for example, oriented towards vocational education) or syllabus (for example, from the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies)
- a course allowing students to develop and demonstrate learning outcomes from more than one key learning area
- a course based on the core or discretionary learning outcomes of one or more subject area syllabuses
- a course based on an emerging field of knowledge or enterprise
- courses founded in a problem-based approach — for example, the Coalition of Essential Schools
- courses based more explicitly on the valued attributes of a lifelong learner or on one or more cross-curricular priority — for example, lifeskills — and drawing on core learning outcomes from a number of key learning areas
- courses that enable core learning outcomes to be demonstrated with specialised content and/or contexts
- courses that allow the continuation, promotion and/or integration of current school systems' policies.

Teachers will first need to determine whether there is a need for a particular course. Through consultation with staff, students, parents and community, developers will need to ascertain the scope of the proposed course and make explicit the desired learning outcomes.

If courses are to be developed collaboratively at the community level, cultural sensitivity and local cultural relevance will need to be considered. This will be particularly important when designing courses to meet the needs and interests of school communities that include Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students, faith-based communities and communities comprised of people from diverse linguistic and cultural groups.

Courses may vary in duration, ranging from a minimum duration of one semester to a maximum of a number of years. In these cases, schools might be offering their curriculum via a 'smorgasbord approach' or with vertical timetabling. In such cases, there could be typical combinations or set patterns of 'modules' comprising an overall course. Within this schema, specialised 'modules' might be offered, including vocational education units.

In such cases, schools would need to 'track' core learning outcomes to make sure that a student's complete curriculum choice does not neglect any core learning outcomes. Additionally, schools would need to be mindful of the relationship between indicative time allocations for core and discretionary learning outcomes.

The Studies of Society and Environment syllabus outlines one way to develop courses for lower secondary students based on optional subject syllabuses in civics, geography and history. The optional subject syllabuses describe how a combination of any two optional subject syllabuses will assist students to demonstrate all the core learning outcomes for Levels 5 and 6.

Courses designed by school authorities, professional associations and others using learning outcomes of key learning area syllabuses, need to reflect the guidelines, principles and decisions that underpin these syllabuses.

Planning

When planning Studies of Society and Environment programs, syllabus requirements, the learning needs of students and approaches to planning should be considered. Consideration also needs to be given to assessment procedures.

Syllabus requirements

When planning in the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area, teachers should consider the following syllabus requirements:

Key learning area outcomes describe the contribution that Studies of Society and Environment makes to the Years 1 to 10 curriculum and to the development of the valued attributes of lifelong learners.

Learning outcomes, core and discretionary, selected for inclusion in a program should reflect the levels at which the students within the school or year level are working. The core learning outcomes within each strand of Studies of Society and Environment are interrelated and complementary and should not be considered in isolation when planning for learning and assessment. In particular, the key values of democratic process; social justice; ecological and economic sustainability; and peace, concepts, processes and core content topics are embedded in the core learning outcomes and must be considered when planning.

Core content is drawn from the core learning outcomes. During Years 1 to 10 students should be provided with activities within programs that incorporate the levelled core content of each Studies of Society and Environment strand. The core content should be contextualised to suit the school setting and students' needs and interests.

Principles of assessment should be incorporated through appropriate, effective and efficient assessment processes within activities and units that constitute a program.

Principles of equity for all students should be supported and promoted. This will allow equitable access and participation and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and what they can do with what they know. It will also enable students to explore equity issues in and through Studies of Society and Environment.

Cross-curricular priorities of literacy, numeracy, lifeskills and a futures perspective should be embedded in programs wherever possible so that students have regular contact with each of these priorities at all stages of their schooling.

Valued attributes of a lifelong learner should be included in a program to ensure that a contribution to lifelong learning is identified in units and activities that cultivate habits of mind and dispositions to facilitate the development of these valued attributes.

Consideration of students' needs

All programs should encourage the use of learner-centred approaches and take into account the school population and the individual and group differences that exist. Wherever possible, a program should ensure that students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate the learning outcomes consistently. Similarly, programs should allow students opportunities to demonstrate learning outcomes in various contexts.

Students have a diverse range of educational requirements. They differ in their rates of learning at different points in their development and in the nature of this

learning. They also differ in their understandings, skills, needs and learning styles. This diversity should be taken into consideration when planning both learning and assessment. All students must be given appropriate opportunities to demonstrate learning outcomes.

When planning, teachers should:

- respect and value the individuality, identity, cultural, linguistic, economic, geographic and social circumstances of each student
- acknowledge and build upon the prior learning and experiences of students
- actively engage students, where possible, in aspects of planning and assessment
- acknowledge and cater for the varying interests, abilities, preferred learning styles and rates of development of students
- provide various age-appropriate choices.

Planning should acknowledge students who progress at a faster rate than others. Teachers should provide these students with opportunities to develop understandings related to outcomes at the next level. Alternatively, students could work towards demonstrations of outcomes at the same level in other contexts or work towards demonstrations of discretionary outcomes at the same level.

To assist students who are working towards outcomes beyond those already demonstrated, teachers may need to create:

- further opportunities to develop an understanding of the concepts and to demonstrate the outcomes
- activities in different contexts to make sense of the outcomes involved
- different learning–teaching approaches
- a clearer explanation of what is expected of students and more explicit links to other understandings and experiences
- additional support to facilitate learning
- more time to demonstrate the outcomes.

Programs for students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties should provide multiple pathways for engaging in learning experiences and demonstrating learning outcomes. Most students with disabilities will demonstrate progress similar to that of their peers. Some students with disabilities and learning difficulties may not be able to demonstrate all learning outcomes within a level and may find some strands more difficult than others.

The level statements at Foundation Level and some sample learning outcomes have been developed for students with disabilities who are not yet demonstrating the core learning outcomes at Level 1. Teachers are encouraged to develop personalised learning outcomes for Foundation Level to suit the needs, interests and abilities of individual students.

Learning outcomes developed from the level statements at Foundation Level should:

- describe what students are expected to know and do with what they know
- be written so that they can be assessed
- be demonstrable
- reflect the intent of the level statement
- be tailored to the students' individual needs
- be linked to the students' individualised curriculum programs.

Approaches to planning

When planning for effective learning experiences, teachers should:

- where possible, develop partnerships within the school and the wider community, including parents/caregivers, cultural and religious groups, government agencies, support services and community organisations

- ensure content, teaching strategies, resources and assessment techniques and tasks:
 - provide for a range of language competencies
 - are equitable
 - take into account the range of abilities and needs of the students
 - are challenging, rewarding and purposeful
- provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of both the concepts and the processes within the learning outcomes
- consider the reporting requirements of the student, school, school authority, parents/caregivers and community
- consider staff expertise and interests and provide support networks for sharing skills and professional development
- introduce new perspectives to social and environmental studies
- encourage thinking and problem-solving processes
- foster links within and across other key learning areas
- develop literacy and numeracy skills relevant to Studies of Society and Environment
- promote lifeskills and a futures perspective.

Common planning of learning and assessment activities may assist groups of teachers to reach shared understandings of learning outcomes and what students are expected to know and do with what they know. Common planning is a collaborative process that may involve different teachers in using the same learning outcomes to plan:

- learning and/or assessment activities
- different activities in different contexts
- activities in different key learning areas.

Common planning is useful in promoting consistency as this process:

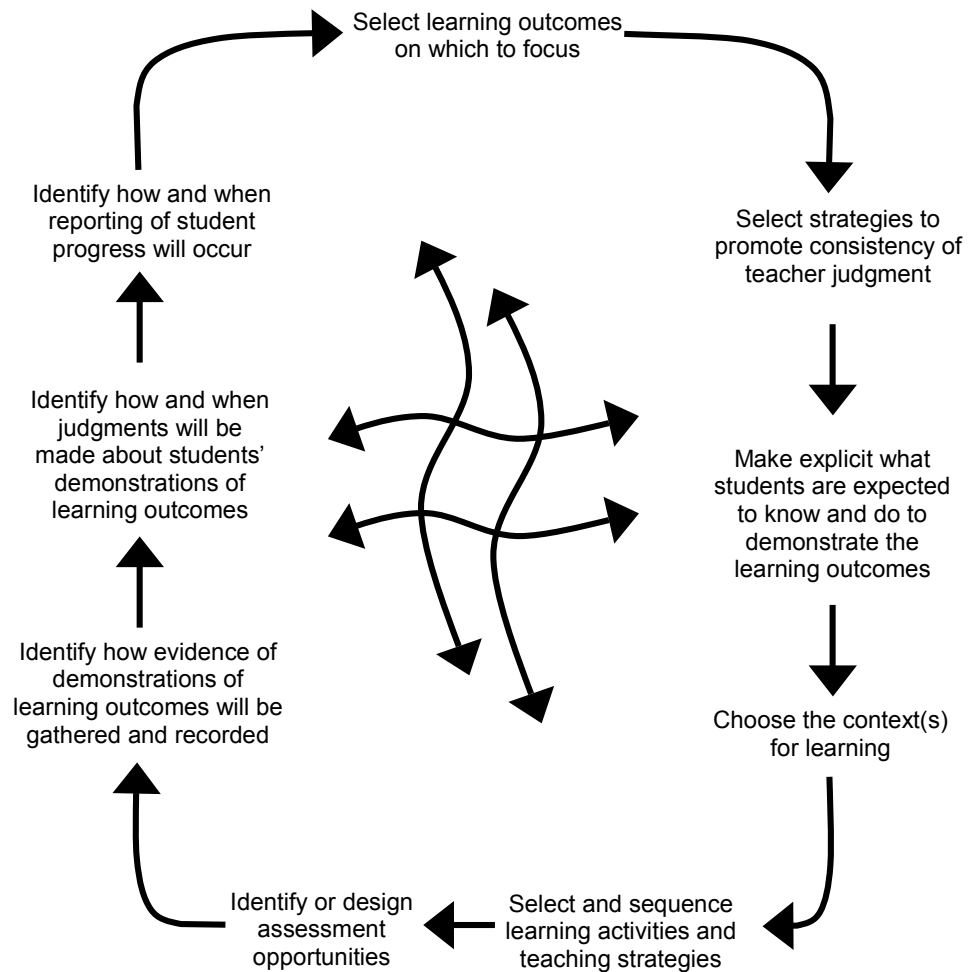
- develops shared understandings about the intention of the core learning outcomes and how they might be demonstrated
- develops shared understandings about learning experiences and assessment opportunities related to the core learning outcomes
- facilitates comparability of teachers' judgments about students' demonstrations of the core learning outcomes
- allows students to develop connections between learnings within and across key learning areas
- provides students with access to a range of teachers with various talents and perspectives.

Unit planning considerations

A Studies of Society and Environment unit provides opportunities for students to demonstrate identified core learning outcomes by experiencing various activities from a range of contexts. Units will typically be developed and implemented by taking into consideration the school program in Studies of Society and Environment. Where appropriate, the unit should develop information about the knowledge, processes, skills and dispositions drawn from within and across the strands of Studies of Society and Environment, possibly from the other key learning areas and possibly from different levels.

Planning process

Planning is a dynamic, cyclical and recursive process involving concurrent planning of learning and assessment activities, as the following diagram shows.



Planning for learning, teaching, assessment and reporting

The phases of this planning process are detailed below. They may not necessarily occur in a linear way. For example, the context(s) of learning activities may exist as the starting-point for planning, which then determine the selection of learning outcomes. Alternatively, other factors may determine the learning outcomes, which then require context(s) to be chosen.

Select the learning outcomes

- Consider the prior learning, needs and interests of the students.
- Identify the learning outcome(s) that will be the focus of learning and assessment. These may come from the strands of Studies of Society and Environment, from other key learning areas and from other levels.
- Identify learning outcomes from the same strand, other strands or other key learning areas that could complement the learning associated with the focus learning outcome(s).
- Make sure you are cognisant of the developmental sequence by looking at the key concepts and key processes of the learning outcomes at the levels before and after the focus outcomes.

Select strategies to promote consistency of teacher judgment

- Consider consistency strategies that could be implemented — for example, collaborative planning, common criteria sheets, descriptions of typical responses, moderation processes (formal and informal).
- Identify which strategies will be used to ensure consistency of judgment of students' demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Analyse the learning outcomes

- Make explicit what students need to know and do with what they know to demonstrate the learning outcomes:
 - Identify which key concepts and key processes organise the learning outcomes.
 - Analyse the learning outcomes and identify what students are expected to know and do with what they know.
 - Enhance understandings of the values, concepts, processes and core content topics embedded in the core learning outcomes by using a range of sources such as the descriptions of key values and core content in the syllabus, the elaborations of core learning outcomes in the guidelines.
 - Use elements from the syllabus (including the core content and values) and sourcebook guidelines (including elaborations) to support understanding of the outcomes.

Choose the context/s for learning

- Consider the specific needs and abilities of the students (learning styles, special needs, various circumstances, previous experiences and prior learnings), select context/s and activities.
- Consider the values, concepts, processes, core content topics and valued attributes of a lifelong learner as a unit focus.
- Consider the available school and local resources.

Select and sequence learning activities (and teaching strategies)

- Use the analyses of the learning outcomes to guide the selection of context and learning and assessment activities.
- Create activities and/or use those in the sourcebook modules and other resources that provide opportunities for students to develop understandings associated with the learning outcomes.
- Identify teaching strategies that meet the needs of the students.
- Sequence learning and assessment activities according to phases of a social or environmental inquiry model such as exploring, investigating and synthesising.
- Create multiple opportunities, in a variety of contexts, for students to demonstrate the learning outcomes.
- Ensure flexibility in the sequence of activities to enable responsiveness to unexpected situations.

Identify or design assessment opportunities

- Identify activities that would provide opportunities during the learning process for students to demonstrate what they are expected to know and do with what they know in relation to the learning outcomes.
- Develop specific assessment techniques, tasks and instruments that are compatible with learning experiences.
- Make explicit to the students the criteria to be used when making judgments.

Gather and record evidence

- Use techniques and instruments to gather and record evidence of demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Make judgments

- Use the recorded evidence to make judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes.
- Reflect on whether judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes are consistent and identify strategies that could be used in future units to promote consistency of judgment.

Report student progress

- Identify how and when feedback will be provided to students about their learning and their progress in relation to the learning outcomes.
- Identify whether (and if so, how and when) other audiences will be provided with information about the learning that has occurred in the unit of work.

Unit organisation

Units may be structured in different ways according to the requirements of schools but should typically include:

- unit title
- the learning outcomes on which the unit is based
- unit overview and purpose, structured around the processes of social and environmental inquiry
- assessment strategy, including tools for profiling and recording student demonstrations of outcomes
- unit duration, the equivalent of at least an average of 1.5 hours a week
- terminology
- links within and across the key learning areas
- equity considerations
- school authority policies, possibly including safety and educational settings
- sequenced and phased activities that provide opportunities to develop the values, concepts and processes associated with the learning outcomes
- special considerations for individuals or groups of students
- resources
- unit evaluation.

Learning outcomes

Units include activities based on learning outcomes which may be selected from:

- within or across the strands of Studies of Society and Environment
- one or more levels within Studies of Society and Environment
- across key learning areas.

Units may include activities based on discretionary learning outcomes to broaden the understandings of those students who have already demonstrated the requirements of the core learning outcomes.

Additional learning outcomes in the optional subject syllabuses may assist in the design of civics, geography and history units or courses.

Teachers planning for students with disabilities who demonstrate a level of understanding before that of Level 1 may develop outcomes to meet individual needs. Examples of learning outcomes for each strand at Foundation Level are provided in the scope and sequence of learning outcomes section.

Planning for multiple learning outcomes

School communities may develop a range of learner-centred approaches that provide opportunities for demonstrations of multiple learning outcomes. Multiple learning outcomes may be associated in the following ways:

- Outcomes from within or across key learning areas that are complementary and relate to similar learning contexts or content.
 - Complementary groups of outcomes from within a key learning area such as related outcomes from the Time, Continuity and Change strand and the Place and Space strand of Studies of Society and Environment.
 - Complementary groups of outcomes from across key learning areas such as outcomes from the Media strand of The Arts and outcomes from the Culture and Identity strand of Studies of Society and Environment.
- Using different contexts in which to apply the knowledge, practices and dispositions developed through engagement with other outcomes.
 - Using social inquiry processes developed in Studies of Society and Environment to make investigations when in role in Drama.
 - Choreographing and performing dance sequences that express knowledge about attitudes and dispositions gained in the Time, Continuity and Change strand of Studies of Society and Environment.
- Outcomes from strands in a key learning area, or across key learning areas, which draw on connected content or contexts that culminate in authentic products, performances or responses.
 - Students may undertake a study of natural disasters and be working toward outcomes in three distinct and separate areas of learning — for example, exploring natural disasters in a Studies of Society and Environment context, in a Science context and by exploring the energy present in the disasters in a Dance context.

Selecting learning outcomes from a range of levels is also possible using these approaches. These learning outcomes may be selected from:

- one strand in a key learning area
- a number of strands in a key learning area
- strands across key learning areas.

Social and environmental inquiry

Social and/or environmental inquiry processes are integral to planning in Studies of Society and Environment. Inquiry learning develops students' investigative and critical thinking skills. Inquiries begin with the prior knowledge and experience of students and include various phases such as:

- identifying an issue
- framing and focusing questions
- locating, organising and analysing evidence
- evaluating, synthesising and reporting conclusions
- possibly taking action
- reconsidering and reflecting on consequences and outcomes of the phases.

The sourcebook modules model a range of inquiry processes and strategies to promote the development and application of social and environmental inquiry processes. The research papers *Inquiry processes in primary Studies of Society and Environment* and *Inquiry processes in secondary Studies of Society and Environment* offer further advice and are available on the Queensland School Curriculum Council website (www.qscc.qld.edu.au).

Developing units using sourcebook modules

Units may be created by modifying Studies of Society and Environment sourcebook modules to meet students' needs and interests and school contexts. Sourcebook modules provide examples of planning for learning and assessment using an outcomes approach. The full range of sourcebook modules developed for Levels 1 to 6 include learning and assessment activities based on Studies of Society and Environment and cross-key learning area outcomes.

Other sourcebook module materials that will assist with planning programs, units and activities are:

- Levels 1 to 6 module topics for Studies of Society and Environment (Appendix 3)
- Levels 1 to 6 module learning outcomes maps for Studies of Society and Environment (Appendix 4)
- Associated module information for Studies of Society and Environment available on the Queensland School Curriculum Council website (www.qscc.qld.edu.au).

Sourcebook modules contain activities, resource materials, information regarding assessment and background and reference material to support the implementation of the syllabus. The activities contained within the modules are neither exhaustive nor definitive, but are intended as a guide for planning school and class units, activities and programs. The modules are based on syllabus requirements, current practice and the anticipated needs and interests of students at different stages in their schooling. The modules demonstrate:

- a series of learning and assessment activities that facilitate student demonstration of core learning outcomes
- how to combine core learning outcomes from within or across strands and possibly key learning areas in a meaningful context
- the relationship between core learning outcomes and planning learning and assessment
- how the core content can be used for planning learning and assessment
- how equity considerations can be incorporated into activities
- the use of different learner-centred approaches to learning and teaching, particularly social and environmental inquiry approaches
- activities that contribute to the development of the cross-curricular priorities.

Teachers are encouraged to select and adapt module activities and to sequence them in whatever way is most appropriate for their students, and may combine activities from other modules and sources.

Alternatively, teachers might develop their own outcomes-based units by:

- referring to the Studies of Society and Environment sourcebook modules to develop their own outcomes-based units
- seeking background information about topics such as social and environmental inquiry approaches, values, sensitive issues, processes and perspectives
- seeking information to develop assessment tasks and instruments for particular learning outcomes
- comparing criteria associated with outcomes for consistent judgment of student demonstration of learning outcomes.

Sensitive issues

Activities that deal with topics of a potentially sensitive nature — for example, cultural studies, values and spiritual beliefs and personal stories, histories and experiences — must be dealt with thoughtfully and carefully. School authorities may have policies to advise teachers on how to deal with such issues.

Teachers need to be aware that no learning activity is value free. Before dealing with sensitive issues, teachers are encouraged to identify and critically examine their own attitudes and opinions. Teachers should consider that:

- sensitive issues will arise in Studies of Society and Environment
- students and parents/caregivers should participate in the development of aspects of programs and units, particularly those with sensitive issues
- students and parents/caregivers should be informed when sensitive issues are to be taught as part of a unit
- the learning environment should be an emotionally and socially safe and supportive environment that enables individual opinions and attitudes to be respected
- there is a need for impartiality when dealing with sensitive issues and a need to present a range of perspectives which show understanding of and respect for individuals and their cultural and religious diversity.

Many strategies are available to support the teaching of sensitive issues. Some of these are modelled in the Studies of Society and Environment sourcebook modules and initial in-service materials.

Activity planning considerations

Activities are planned learning experiences that actively engage students in the teaching and learning process. The sequencing of activities plays an important role in providing opportunities for students to demonstrate learning outcomes and should assist students to develop the knowledge, skills, processes and dispositions associated with the key learning area. When developing and implementing activities teachers should consider the school's Studies of Society and Environment program and unit, the resources that are available, safety issues and the policies of the school. These aspects will influence the capacity of activities to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate identified core and discretionary learning outcomes.

Learning activities should provide students with opportunities to:

- develop the necessary knowledge, skills, processes and dispositions to demonstrate the learning outcomes
- demonstrate learning outcomes which they have had previous experience with but have not yet demonstrated
- demonstrate learning outcomes at a level beyond that previously demonstrated.

Selection and sequencing of activities

When planning activities within units or from sourcebook modules it is necessary to consider:

- the capacity of the activities to develop understandings associated with both the concepts and the processes of the learning outcome(s)
- the appropriateness and relevance of the activities in relation to students' prior learning, abilities and interests
- the appropriateness and relevance of the activities in relation to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, socioeconomic circumstances, gender and geographic location
- the range of learning styles and various levels of student ability
- how activities are sequenced to ensure they provide for developmental learning
- how activities are sequenced to ensure they develop the phases of social and environmental inquiry
- multiple opportunities in a range of contexts for students to demonstrate learning outcomes

- the aspects of literacy and numeracy that will be used and whether these will need to be taught
- the timing and pacing of activities
- the availability and management of resources and space
- staff expertise, interest and experience
- providing time for student reflection.

Modification of activities

Where activities are developed from the sourcebook modules and other sources, modification may need to be made to match the specific contexts, needs and abilities of students in order to provide greater opportunity for demonstration of learning outcomes.

Local contexts

Activities that need modification to suit the local context include instances where:

- teachers and tutors do not have access to suggested support personnel, facilities and/or resources
- suggested contexts do not relate to the experience and circumstances of all students — for example, activities that use the beach as a context may not be relevant to communities in central Queensland
- students are unable to attend school for medical reasons
- students are receiving home-schooling
- cultural factors inhibit students from engaging in particular learning activities
- students are unable to engage with the curriculum without specific support.

The diverse cultural and social backgrounds of students should be acknowledged when planning activities. Consultation with parents may be necessary as part of the acknowledgment and valuing of various perspectives. Communication between the school and its constituent groups will ensure cultural beliefs and needs are respected and that a sense of whole-school community is promoted.

Special educational needs

Students with special educational needs are those who, in order to access and participate in the curriculum, may require modification of the school program, units and activities. Students with special educational needs include those:

- with disabilities/impairments
- with learning difficulties/disabilities
- who demonstrate significant behavioural and adjustment difficulties.

To demonstrate the learning outcomes, these students may require support programs, services and other resources that are complementary and additional to those which are provided to other students. Activities should provide multiple pathways that optimise students' participation and demonstration of learning outcomes.

Studies of Society and Environment activities should:

- cater for a range of learning styles using a variety of teaching and learning strategies
- allow multiple opportunities in a range of contexts for students to demonstrate learning outcomes
- provide a range of tasks and styles of presentations for assessment
- allow the time necessary for learning and assessment to occur.

Teachers are encouraged to contact local specialists, support groups and advisory support teachers for further ideas for creating activities that provide access and participation for students with special educational needs. Appendix 1 includes further information on students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties.

Planning assessment for demonstrations of learning outcomes

The syllabus outlines the principles that underpin effective assessment practices. Assessment requires that students are able to show what they have learned – that is, that they can demonstrate what they know and what they can do with what they know.

There is an integral relationship between the experiences that promote learning and the various assessment techniques that are used to facilitate students' demonstrations of learning outcomes. The Studies of Society and Environment syllabus highlights this relationship in the following stages of planning:

- planning for learning and assessment
- selecting assessment techniques and instruments
- collecting evidence
- making judgments using criteria
- student profiling
- reporting.

Planning for learning and assessment

Each learning outcome describes what students should know and be able to do with what they know. The learning outcomes provide a starting-point for planning learning experiences and identifying assessment opportunities. Learning outcomes inform the assessment process and influence the selection of assessment techniques and instruments. The learning experiences provided for students also provide opportunities for teachers to gather evidence about students' demonstrations of outcomes.

Selecting assessment techniques and instruments

Students' demonstrations of learning outcomes should be assessed through a range of assessment techniques. A range of techniques will ensure that:

- techniques are appropriate for assessing the 'know' and the 'do' of the outcome
- techniques cater for the range of student learning styles and abilities
- students have multiple opportunities in a range of contexts to demonstrate outcomes.

At all year levels, teachers are encouraged to use the following techniques as detailed in the syllabus:

- observations
- conferencing
- portfolios
- writing and work samples
- performances, demonstrations and exhibitions
- written tests.

The development of assessment criteria will assist students to understand what they are expected to know and do with what they know and will enhance consistency in making judgments.

Collecting evidence

Some students may be able to demonstrate a learning outcome the first time they are provided with an opportunity to do so. If they are then provided with additional opportunities in different contexts and again demonstrate the outcome, they could be deemed to have demonstrated the learning outcome consistently. Other students may require many more opportunities to demonstrate the outcome before the same decision could be made about them. A judgment can be made when a pattern of demonstration of the outcome becomes evident. A range of assessment instruments can assist teachers to record evidence of student demonstrations — for example, observation checklists and criteria sheets.

Teachers therefore make judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes when they are satisfied that they have sufficient evidence of such demonstrations.

Making judgments

Judgment of students' demonstrations of learning outcomes should be based on a range of evidence. This evidence should be judged using specific criteria drawn from the learning outcomes. Criteria should be made known to students so the basis for judgment is clear.

Decisions about a student's demonstrations of learning outcomes should be made with reference to the learning outcome and not the performance of other students.

Materials and processes to support the consistency of teachers' judgments within and among schools can be developed through:

- shared understandings
- descriptions of ideal responses
- criteria sheets
- common planning and assessment tasks
- examination of student folios
- moderation processes (formal and informal).

Examples of these are provided in Studies of Society and Environment sourcebook modules.

Shared understandings

Where possible, teachers are encouraged to collaborate with others to develop a shared understanding of tasks and consistency in making judgments about demonstrations of learning outcomes. This can be either a formal or an informal process in which teachers discuss and compare their evidence and decisions in relation to students' demonstrations of learning outcomes. Comparison of evidence and justification of teachers' judgments are central to accountability.

Descriptions of ideal responses

Descriptions of ideal responses (such as student work samples) provide concrete references for teachers to use when determining whether an outcome has been demonstrated. They are not standards in themselves, but are indicative of them.

Criteria sheets

Criteria make explicit to students and teachers the properties, components or dimensions by which the students' demonstrations of learning outcomes, or responses to tasks related to learning outcomes, will be judged. Criteria used to make decisions about students' demonstrations of a learning outcome should be drawn from an analysis of that learning outcome. Criteria used to make decisions about a student's response to a specific task should be drawn from

an analysis of the relationship between the task and the focus learning outcomes.

Careful defining of criteria facilitates consistency of judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes. Teachers may collaboratively develop common criteria by analysing core learning outcomes of a specific task and identifying and recording criteria in the form of a criteria sheet. The criteria sheet is used when making judgments about students' demonstrations of core learning outcomes or responses to specific tasks.

Common planning and assessment tasks

Where two or more teachers plan activities together, they can reach a common understanding of expected outcomes. Where different groups of students undertake the same activities, consistent decisions regarding their demonstration of learning outcomes can then be made.

Examination of students' folios

A student folio is a collection of a student's work assembled over a period of time. It may include day-to-day tasks, work produced for assessment tasks or selections of a student's best work showing effort, progress and demonstration of learning outcomes. A folio containing a complete collection of a student's work is often used to document and demonstrate student progress. Collaboratively examining a student's portfolio can promote consistency of judgments as it provides teachers with opportunities to discuss and compare selected items within the folio and the judgments they have made about a student's demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Moderation processes (formal and informal)

Formal moderation processes occur when schools or school authorities require teachers from within or across schools to compare student work and to discuss the consistency of judgments about demonstrations of learning outcomes. Informal moderation occurs any time teachers share their understandings of judgments of students' demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Student profiling

Students' demonstrations of learning outcomes should be tracked in written or electronic form that has been developed at teacher, school and/or system level. Student profiles may provide a framework for monitoring student progress against described learning outcome sequences. The maintenance of student folios is strongly recommended so that examples of the most recent evidence may be used to facilitate judgments. These judgments will be influenced by the purpose for which the profile is intended. Information recorded on the profile may be used, for example, to plan future learning experiences, to place students on a learning continuum, to report to parents/caregivers or to understand trends. 'Scope and sequence of core learning outcomes of Studies of Society and Environment' (Appendix 2) may be used as a tracking device for an individual student's demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Reporting

Results of assessment need to be clearly communicated to students, parents, caregivers, other teachers and paraprofessionals who support students' learning progress. Teachers may opt to report in different ways for different key learning areas.

In an outcomes approach, reporting occurs in terms of learning outcomes. A range of approaches for reporting is possible. While the final decision rests with school authorities or individual schools, teachers could report to parents or caregivers about students' demonstrations of all or some of the learning outcomes by referring, for example, to:

- core learning outcomes
- level statements
- the overall learning outcomes/the seven attributes of a lifelong learner
- cross-curricular priorities
- the key processes of Studies of Society and Environment.

As students of Studies of Society and Environment will most likely engage in activities that draw from cross-strand units and/or programs, it is recommended that reporting be based on learning outcomes rather than strands.