

# Queensland Studies Framework: Background Paper

*8 July version*



# Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>NOTE TO READERS .....</b>                   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>PREFACE .....</b>                           | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>CONTEXT .....</b>                           | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....</b>                 | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>PHASES OF LEARNING .....</b>                | <b>15</b> |
| <b>LEARNING CONTINUITY IN THE PHASES .....</b> | <b>17</b> |
| <b>QSA SYLLABUSES.....</b>                     | <b>19</b> |
| <b>ASSESSING.....</b>                          | <b>22</b> |
| <b>REPORTING .....</b>                         | <b>24</b> |
| <b>KEEPING RECORDS.....</b>                    | <b>25</b> |
| <b>TESTING .....</b>                           | <b>25</b> |
| <b>CERTIFICATION .....</b>                     | <b>25</b> |
| <b>RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOLS.....</b>          | <b>26</b> |

# NOTE TO READERS

The QSA is developing a *Queensland Studies Framework*.

It is intended that the *Queensland Studies Framework* will provide a clear future direction for curriculum in Queensland schools and describe:

- what syllabuses should be;
- how syllabuses will adapt to changes in constructs of knowledge, pedagogy and technology;
- how syllabuses will assist in preparing students for multiple futures; and
- how to create more effective continuity in learning from P–12.

The framework will also describe how syllabuses should be used by schools and teachers.

A key role of the QSA is the development of syllabuses for use by schools. The QSA will use the framework as a guide in the development of the next generation of Queensland syllabuses.

The QSA's goal is to develop syllabuses that support young people as they move through the three phases of learning — early, middle and senior. However the relationship between teachers and their students is central to learning. The QSA's syllabuses should be able to be used by teachers to effectively facilitate young people's learning from preschool to Year 12 or to their exit from the education system.

The framework will provide a valuable guide to teachers to understand the context and purpose of Queensland syllabuses and the learning outcomes and standards that are expected of students.

The QSA cannot develop this framework in isolation. We need to consult with our partners and stakeholders and incorporate their views. Therefore we are releasing this background paper to the *Queensland Studies Framework*. It outlines the principles and underpinning philosophy for the framework. It also outlines beliefs about learners and learning and the phases of learning, while describing how the QSA's current products and services contribute to learning continuity, coherence and rigour from preschool to Year 12.

It is intended to stimulate discussion on future directions of syllabus development in Queensland in the educational community. It will be of particular interest to:

- curriculum leaders
- teachers
- VET providers
- parents/caregivers
- students in university teaching courses
- members of university education faculties
- the education community generally.

We are asking you for your feedback and opinions. We would like to hear what you think of the issues outlined in this paper. We would like to know whether you approve of the guiding principles and agree with the phases of learning and their features. Do the six features of QSA syllabuses encompass all they need to? Have we made the links to assessing and reporting clear enough?

We have not included a specific form on which to respond because we do not want to limit the discussion to those issues which we think are the most important. We want individuals, groups and organisations to provide feedback on any aspect of the document.

You can:

- send a personal response; or
- contribute to a response from a particular school, groups or association

You can do this by:

- email — electronic responses should be attached as Microsoft Word documents and sent to [secretariat@gsa.qld.edu.au](mailto:secretariat@gsa.qld.edu.au).
- mail — written material should be sent to the Queensland Studies Framework Project, Queensland Studies Authority, PO Box 307, Spring Hill QLD 4004.
- fax — faxes should be sent to 07 3221 2553,

Meetings will be organised with our key stakeholder groups — Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, the Department of Education, unions, principals, teachers and parents during August. After consultations on this paper we will develop a draft *Queensland Studies Framework*. There will be further consultation about the framework itself.

# Preface

Under the *Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002* the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) has the function to develop syllabuses and guidelines from preschool to Year 12. As the principal syllabus development body for young people aged 5–19 years, it is paramount that the QSA:

- understands the present and future educational needs of young people; and
- positions itself to provide educational leadership in curriculum and assessment.

The QSA can best provide an educational direction for its key partners by signalling its long-term role in statewide curriculum through its Studies Framework. The Authority's goal is to develop syllabuses that allow students to seamlessly move through the three phases of learning — early, middle and senior. Effective articulation between syllabuses will:

- minimise the impact of the transition between the phases of learning; and
- be based on educational values and principles appropriate across the learning phases.

These syllabuses will be used by the QSA's key educational partners to develop curriculum programs in schools and for individuals.

Preliminary feedback suggests that the community wants a curriculum which is:

- robust and makes the most of individual talents and capabilities
- responsive to changing and emerging futures; and
- innovative in its approaches.

These expectations will have varying impact on the curriculum across the three phases of learning.

Historically Queensland schooling has been based on age, with learning experiences generally organised by yearly progression. At different ages, young people have traditionally attended different schools: kindergarten, preschool, primary and secondary school. The relevant data shows most young people will typically attend two or more schools, or, in some cases, none at all. Students will increasingly:

- learn through both face-to-face and technology-assisted modes of learning
- spend time in different types of institutions
- have 'broken' or varied periods of schooling in Queensland and other places; or
- have part of their schooling in government schools and another part in non-government schools.

Young people's learning pathways will become more complex and individualised and lead to a broader interpretation of schooling.

Because the *Queensland Studies Framework* will be based on a learning continuum with identified milestones, it will allow planning for learning with variable and flexible rates and pathways that can occur in the many different types of schools and other locations and circumstances in which formal schooling may occur.

The Studies Framework will also reflect State Government initiatives, at whatever phase of P–12 they apply, to support quality teaching and school leadership in the areas of curriculum choice, pedagogy, planning and assessment.

# Context

The Queensland community is in a period of profound change:

The future of every young Queenslander depends very much on their ability to adapt to these changes, achieve high-level qualifications and continued learning throughout their lives. (ETRF White Paper p. 12)

The challenge for educators is to decide how best to equip people to navigate what Robert Theobald has called 'the rapids of change' (Schofield 1999).

The following is a brief overview of some of these 'rapids of change', affecting education in the next ten years and further from contexts that are global, national and state.

## Global

Globalisation is a multi-faceted set of processes which include not only the changes that have flowed from the opening up of markets and new information technologies but also 'new concepts which mean that shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders are linking people's lives more deeply, more intensely and more immediately than ever before'. (Power 2003)

Globalisation has resulted in:

- developed nations becoming increasingly multi-cultural and at environmental risk
- knowledge and innovation becoming the core of economic development.

Knowledge industries — not just the high tech ones we are used to hearing about, but core industries like health and education — are increasingly sources of employment over the last forty years. This is a fundamental shift. In the past, the key resources of wealth generation have been land, labour and physical materials. In the future they will be ideas, creativity and knowledge. (Bentley 1998)

- education becoming internationalised (Australia's third largest export)
- continual advances in information and communication technology (ICT), and challenging social and cultural identities.
- economic forces increasing the gaps between rich and poor and tending to polarise society.
- global forces creating greater uncertainty in life, requiring people to have skills that enable them to cope in a world of super-complexity and constant change.

These global changes have a significant impact on the type of education and training provided for young people.

## National

The national educational agenda is influenced by changes in state and federal governments and by organisations such as the Curriculum Corporation and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). In recent times educational agendas have highlighted the importance of the following when deciding the type of educational change that needs to take place:

## **Curriculum consistency**

There is considerable debate at the national level regarding the consistency of curriculum outcomes for students across the states. There has been concerted pressure to ensure that students achieve more consistent curriculum outcomes. To promote this consistency states have agreed to:

- structural and curriculum initiatives
- implement common starting and finishing ages for schooling by 2010.

## **Vocational education**

Stakeholders understand the broad nature of the new economies emerging through globalisation, Queensland's economic stake in this trend and the need to provide vocational education and training. In particular vocational education (learning skills for a working life and vocational training) is of interest to:

- parents who want their children to have economic independence
- businesses who expect future employees to have foundational capabilities for work
- governments who want to assure the economic competitiveness of their region.

Generic and entrepreneurial skills for work such as the Mayer key competencies and employability skills are the subject of numerous reports in the area of vocational education and training. While these skills have been embedded in many curriculum documents and are generally expected to be taught, how they are assessed and reported is a current focus of national activity.

## **Literacy and Numeracy**

National literacy and numeracy benchmarks have been defined. States report against these benchmarks at Years 3, 5 and 7 using their own tests. There is continual debate around:

- the usefulness and uses of such information
- whether these tests should be common national tests, rather than state specific.

## **Citizenship**

Education for citizenship for the next millennium will involve the development of free, active and equal Australians with the capacity to choose their identities, entitlements and duties in an agreed political and legal framework (Keane 1998). Understandings about economic and political choices will be important, as will being able to recognise and challenge social disadvantage.

## **Notions of community**

The notion of community refers not just to geographic communities but any like-minded individuals joined by common purpose. Australians seem to be at a stage where individual freedom, a dominant idea since early 1970s, is being rebalanced with interdependence (Stewart-Weeks 1998). How to manage and sustain those communities in which students will engage are becoming matters in which schools, systems and teachers are playing ever increasing roles.

## **Confident engagement with other cultures**

To confidently engage with other cultures Australians need to be:

- aware of their own cultural identity

- tolerant of other cultural traditions, be they religious, linguistic, racial, ethnic and/or social.

Future generations of young people will need to be prepared to further evolve the Australian cultural identity through an understanding of their cultural origins, reconciliation with our past, and drawing strength from our cultural diversity. They will need communication and inter-cultural skills to enable them to make judgements about different cultural practices as well as to work in diverse environments at home and abroad. Above all, [they] will need to have learned to be cosmopolitan (Schofield 1999).

## **State**

Over the next decade the Queensland Government through its Smart State initiatives will work with government departments, industry and the community to ensure that future generations gain the benefits of a rewarding and fulfilling education that sets the foundations for future success. The QSA is associated with a number of these initiatives such as:

- Education and Training Reforms for the Future
- Smart Investment employment and training priorities (Department of Education and Training)
- Science State Smart State



## Guiding principles

The overall guiding principle for this framework is provided by the Queensland Government's *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* guidelines. The ETRF White Paper (p. 15) states:

We will ensure completion of Year 10 to provide a solid foundation for future learning ...

The development of the next generation of syllabuses and curriculum materials will ensure that studies undertaken in the early and middle phases of learning give young people every opportunity to achieve success in the Senior Phase of Learning. We want all young people to experience a seamless transition between the phases of learning.

## Specific guiding principles

### QSA commitments (from QSA Strategic Plan)

To students and teachers, the QSA will:

- develop and maintain innovative curriculum for changing and future student needs.
- engage and support teachers in design and delivery of QSA functions.

To the education system of Queensland - the QSA will:

- work in partnership with state, independent and Catholic sectors, and under our statutory authority, to lead and influence policies and actions to support quality education in Queensland schools.
- collaborate with vocational education providers, industry, professional groups and tertiary institutions in the interests of better educational outcomes for students.

To QSA staff, products, and services, the QSA will:

- invest in their people to develop their expertise to innovate, develop and maintain high quality products and services, work in partnership and manage data effectively.

### The broader aims of school learning

Governments, the community, parents/caregivers, school authorities, schools, and studies developers express their aims for learning through such things as mission statements, global aims, purposes, overall learning outcomes, and attributes or roles of a lifelong learner. These reflect commitments to the common good and the good of each individual. They typically encompass knowledge, practices and dispositions that transcend study areas and domains of knowledge.

QSA syllabuses and guidelines will continue to describe outcomes of learning in ways that are aspirational for the different phases of learning. All learning, particularly that which is aspirational, is not expected to be amenable to the types of assessing and reporting that syllabuses will typically use to describe a young person's progress in specific studies areas and domains of knowledge.

### The need to encompassing diversity

All young people are entitled to learn in ways and at rates that are appropriate to them.

Syllabuses that describe learning 'milestones' (with related 'signposts' and 'safety nets') mean that learning progress for young people with special learning needs, and physical and intellectual impairments can be positively monitored and reported on.

Learning can also be planned for gifted and talented young people who progress faster than their peers.

### **Underpinning propositions**

All learners:

- learn along a continuum
- pass recognised milestones along the way.

A sense of progression will be gained by learners and their teachers from:

- explicit descriptions of each 'milestone'
- comparison with the related preceding and successive milestones.

Successful learning requires:

- active engagement by the learner ('doing' not just 'absorbing')
- active structuring of knowledge into integrated and usable frameworks
- personalising of knowledge ('transformation' not just 'reproduction')
- development of in-depth understanding, insight and meaning
- disciplined thinking, enquiry and problem solving
- personal value and usefulness to the learner

To support this, the *Queensland Studies Framework* will be based on the following propositions:

1. School-based curriculum planning using QSA developed or accredited syllabuses and guidelines allows the flexible planning of curriculum programs that meet the varying needs of individual learners while attending to statewide expectations about specific outcomes of learning.
2. Teachers should plan for learning and the monitoring of learning at the same time.
3. Because different young people have different learning styles and experiences of life, demonstrations of the expected outcomes of learning can be based on different content and contexts.
4. Monitoring of learning involves making judgments about the demonstrations of learning and reporting those judgments to learners, their parents and carers, teachers, schools systems, and where appropriate the general community.
5. In the early and middle phases of learning, judgments about individual young people's learning should be periodically checked against 'signposts' that mark typical progress so that 'safety net' interventions/supports can be enacted — especially for those progressing slower or faster than is typical.
6. Social justice can be developed through curriculum and assessment/testing that challenge inequities by:
  - acknowledging and minimising unequal outcomes of schooling for different groups of learners in curriculum and testing programs
  - identifying and minimising barriers to access, participation, active engagement,

- construction of knowledge and demonstration of learning
- using the knowledge, skills and experience of all learners as a basis for their learning and for enhancing the learning of others in the community
- developing understanding of, and respect for, diversity within and among groups
- making explicit that knowledge is historically, socially and culturally constructed
- making the relationship between valued knowledge and power relations explicit
- identifying and promoting the capacity of each curriculum area or subject to develop knowledge, practices and dispositions that challenge injustice and inequity and empower learners.

### **The need for continuity of learning**

If each Queensland young person is to have continuity, coherence and rigour in their personal learning, both syllabuses and school curriculum need continuity, coherence and rigour. Table 1 below shows how both syllabuses and curriculum contribute to these.

Syllabuses must provide:

- coherence, continuity and rigour in learning from the beginning to the end of a student's learning journey. From the various curriculums planned from syllabuses by schools, different learners will make different choices in their continuity of learning.
- frameworks for planning courses in specific study areas/subjects and guide learning through descriptors of standards. These are the documents from which schools select curriculum offerings.

Curriculum is the totality of learning experiences which schools and their teachers plan and enact across a balanced spread of study areas/subjects

**Table 1: Syllabus-curriculum interface**

|                                     | Syllabus   | Curriculum   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Continuity                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increases in complexity and sophistication as the learner progresses</li> <li>one phase connects with the preceding or successive phase of learning.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>schools see the learning described in syllabuses for one phase connecting with that of preceding or successive phases of learning</li> <li>planning for a new cohort of students is improved if it is known where individual learners are as they progress to next stage</li> </ul>   |
| Coherence                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>different phases of learning are based on the same set of values and principles, similar models of learning, and use similar language and ideas.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Early phase:</b> teachers are trialling the Early Years Curriculum materials or using the Preschool Guidelines with a clear understanding of the linkages to the syllabuses which follow.</p> <p><b>Middle phase:</b> syllabuses used as an integrated set. Outcomes of learning are what teachers actually plan for, are the basis for gathering evidence and making judgments about demonstrations of learning, and are reported on to learners, their parents/carers, and other teachers</p> <p><b>Senior phase:</b> syllabuses guide subject selection for future study options and careers or jobs. Vocational courses guide certificate selection for future training, apprenticeships and employment.</p> |
| <b>Rigour</b> (depth and challenge) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>standards of learning and assessment clearly describe high expectations about what is to be known and done with what is known.</li> <li>Learning experiences designed with increasing complexity and sophistication of key concepts, organising ideas and key processes to contribute to deeper learning and its application to real-life demands.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole school planning</li> <li>Sequenced units and lessons</li> <li>School work programs</li> <li>School study plans</li> <li>SET plans (senior education and training plans)</li> </ul>  |

There are three contributors to the continuity of learning for each individual learner:

1. Built-in continuity **within the syllabuses** and guidelines for the early, middle, and senior phases of learning.
2. The intended continuity from one phase of learning to the next — that is continuity **between phases of learning**.
3. Because schools plan different curriculum programs or ‘curriculum itineraries’ that will frame a student’s individual learning journey, contribution to continuity of learning comes through the way communities of schools plan learning within and **across their phases of schooling**.

Planning by schools could include procedures for:

- tracking their curriculum offerings
- tracking young people’s curriculum choices
- reporting judgments when appropriate about young people’s demonstrations of learning consistent with the school curriculum framework.

For tracking to be useful there must be:

- consistent language used for planning and reporting by all schools
- consistency of teacher judgments about the demonstrations of learning
- a systematised sharing of those judgments are essential.

**Articulation** and **transition** apply to the circumstances under which young people physically move from buildings and social environments identified as schools, year levels, or stages of schooling. Traditionally, these have been defined by young people’s ages and a related year of schooling. While these have some relationship to the ways, times and rhythms of real learning, they do not accommodate the full spectrum of young people.

### **Challenging boundaries**

Traditionally, curriculum frameworks describe what is already known to curriculum developers and this is then reset or modified for the benefit of learners. There is, however, more knowledge than can ever be transmitted to learners. Knowledge that is necessary in one set of circumstances may not be necessary in another. If curriculum developers recognise this, they can develop metacognitive practices and ideas — ideas that can challenge the way educators ‘think about the way they think’ and plan. Even the concept of knowledge is now understood as tentative and contestable.

The community expects certain things about the learnings required for the good of the individual and society. Formal education must be influenced by these views.

School curriculum has typically been organised according to traditionally recognised domains of knowledge, disciplines, or fields of study. In more recent times, there has been an underlying trend towards overlap and sharing of concepts and methods in established disciplines.

While descriptions of the types of knowledge that underlie school curriculum are needed, there needs to be thought given to:

- how fixed the boundaries between families of disciplines are
- providing broad groupings into which new knowledge can be incorporated.

It is known that in future work environments the boundaries will be challenged. Also cross-disciplinary work environments are becoming common. Real-life learning blurs the sharpness of the boundaries between various bodies of knowledge.

Developing and approving syllabus material needs to legitimately reflect the political and professional arguments about what should or should not feature in the intended curriculum, and to what degree. The existence of a syllabus, framework or guideline legitimates the things that are to be a part of young people's learning.

### **Diversity of views**

Queensland's syllabuses must take into account the community's diversity of views about individual, social, and educational outcomes. The diversity of views is about:

- intellectual, social, creative, moral, spiritual, emotional and physical dimensions of learners
- different learning needs, styles and stages of young people's development
- independent, participatory and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning
- active and responsible participation in a democratic society
- caring family and community relationships
- promoting personal health and wellbeing
- acknowledging cultural and multicultural understanding and experiences
- encouraging concern for social justice and human rights
- building ethical decision-making and action
- contributing to the awareness of environmental sustainability
- recognising the importance of working productively whether paid or unpaid.

## Phases of learning

The *Queensland Studies Framework* will be applicable to the following three phases of learning. Parents, caregivers and the general community expect young people to be entitled to a range of learning appropriate to their needs, interests and environments. The QSA does not define the beginning and/or the end of these phases. Schools and school systems will decide on the organisation and structure of their schools and their curriculum delivery.

### Early phase of learning

This phase involves recognising young people's experiences and learnings, and expanding upon these learnings and experiences in preparation for the middle phase of learning. Curriculum advice for the early years could include things that have been shown to deliver success in learning:

- social and emotional competence, with emphasis on social learning and independence
- health and physical wellbeing, particularly in making healthy choices, and gross-motor and fine-motor development
- language development and communication focusing on oral language in early literacy
- early numeracy and mathematical understandings
- thinking, investigating, imagining, and responding
- helping to provide circumstances in which young people will want to learn.

### Middle phase of learning

This phase is one where young people need to be:

- included and valued in the school community
- facilitated in growth in confidence, resilience and association with a widening circle of adult mentors.

Learning is to be relevant to the real world and offered through a wide variety of experiences. Such structured experiences within and outside the school will enhance competence and self-esteem coming from real achievement in learning environments valuing effort and rigour.

A greater emphasis on learning how to learn, on problem-solving, on analytical and synthesising skills lay the foundations for the more focussed academic demands of the senior phase of learning.

Young people in this phase are entitled to take part in a common curriculum that provides:

- opportunities for developing and demonstrating essential learnings in a wide range of study areas
- cross-curricular priorities of literacy, numeracy, life skills and a futures perspective.
- the possibilities for special talents to be identified and nurtured and emerging aspirations to be explored.

### Senior phase of learning

Young people in this phase should have more choice to:

- develop their preferred learning paths

- become autonomous learners.

There should be a wide range of areas to choose from so that young people develop a broad and deep set of learnings that fit their current and emerging circumstances. Skills identified for work and knowledge contexts of 21st century are orientated to:

- change (adaptability and self-reliance)
- interpersonal skills for teamwork
- analytical skills (ranging from seeing the broad picture to the capacity to sort information effectively and applying knowledge to new situations)
- problem-solving. (Bentley 1998)

This phase of learning should steer young people towards pathways and certification. Building on the middle phase of learning, curriculum choices should lead to success in further study, training and/or employment through a number of ways such as subjects, vocational certificates, study area strands, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.



# Learning continuity in the phases

The three phases of learning are characterised by differences in:

- physical and social identities of learners
- reasoning and making connections
- degree of subjectivity or objectivity used in thinking
- amount of reflection and self-regulation of learning.

## Early phase learning areas

The early phase of learning identifies areas fundamental to developing and encouraging learning in its many forms and in preparation for a lifelong capacity to learn. That is:

- communicating
- creating and designing
- investigating and understanding environments
- sense of self and others
- social living and learning.

## Middle phase learning areas

The middle phase of learning expands fundamental understandings through to deeper and broader understandings of increasing complexity and sophistication. That is:

- novice state to one with expertise
- familiar context to unfamiliar context
- self to community
- concrete to abstract
- single aspect considered to multiple aspects
- simple algorithmic orientation/solution to open-ended creative orientation/solution
- immediate time to far past or future time.

## Senior phase learning areas

The senior phase of learning is based on selecting and specialising as well as an ongoing orientation to enjoy learning. Young people in the middle phase of learning have moved along the learning continuum using a common curriculum, but they can now choose to specialise in particular study areas.

Such choices are made on the basis of what was learned in the middle phase, but young people also have a sense of what they might be doing at the end of the senior phase when they may either start work or progress to further education or training.

The senior phase of learning opens learners to deep and wide understandings in focused areas of study and/or training allowing for future directions:

- student, apprentice, trainee, employee
- familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- self in community
- abstract and formal
- multiple and concurrent aspects

- specific tasks and open-ended problem solving
- interplay of past, present and future time.

# QSA syllabuses

QSA syllabuses and guidelines represent recognised disciplines and fields of study as well as allowing the construction of courses that can operate between and across established domains.

## Principles

The following principles provide the rationale for syllabus developments by the QSA. Committees and writers use these principles as a reference during the stages of syllabus development and in their recommendation of syllabuses for approval.

1. **Inclusivity** — ensuring engagement for all types of learners within many contexts and through a balance of varied and equitable ways of learning.
2. **Collaboration** — consulting with education sectors and stakeholders for input based on expertise and experience in and across a range of study areas.
3. **Responsiveness** — response to proposals from various sources, e.g. internal strategic planning, educational community, the public domain, and government policy - guided by present-day research.
4. **Flexibility** — reviewing, developing and distributing studies products and services as soon as possible in response to altered circumstances and government policies, without diminishing the centrality of the values and principles of the *Queensland Studies Framework*.
5. **Quality** — reviewing, developing and distributing studies products and services of high standard that meet or set national and international trends based on research, internal quality controls, and defined and effective approval processes.
6. **Accountability** — involving defined, transparent and responsive processes of evaluating and revising the development and distribution of studies products and services.
7. **Articulation** — promoting learning continuities from preschool and preparatory years through to post-compulsory pathways of learning, training and/or employment.
8. **Relevance** — developing studies products and services that have clear meaning and purpose to school communities and the needs of their young people.

## Key features

Syllabuses developed by the QSA exhibit the following six features in their design:

**Continuity** — recognising the developmental nature of learning described for the phase at which the syllabuses are pitched, allowing for core, electives and specialisation at appropriate junctures

**Coherence** — using shared language (terminology), the same sets of values and principles, similar models of learning, course planning and assessing across the suite of syllabuses for each phase of learning and into the next

**Rigour** — increasing complexity, sophistication and depth of key concepts, processes and applications through a comprehensive range of learning experiences

**Assessing** — identifying techniques and establishing practices such as modelling and moderation to enable consistency of teacher judgments about demonstrations and achievements of learning

**Reporting** — communicating judgments on learning and the nature of learning achievement

**Pathways** — recognising the diverse and critical choices learners will make at key junctures and enabling access to further study, training and employment.

## Future oriented syllabuses

QSA syllabus developers, writers and committees must be conscious of the P–12 context and continuum in which their work sits as well as the particular focus of the learning phase for which their syllabus is being written. To facilitate a seamless transition for learners from one phase to the next QSA syllabuses will enable progression across learning areas and will be forward looking in terms of the possibilities for learning in those areas. They will also display the characteristics of future-oriented syllabuses.

### **Characteristics of future oriented syllabuses**

Future oriented syllabuses will:

- provide access for the full range of young people
- provide challenges appropriate to the developmental levels of the young people for whom syllabuses are designed
- provide scope for critical thinking and the generation of questions, ideas, goals and visions for the future
- acknowledge a range of curriculum delivery
- be responsive to community interests and emerging industries
- be proactive in terms of new theories and thinking about the nature of intelligence(s)
- provide curriculum choice with due consideration of inclusiveness
- provide internal consistency, coherence and direction that satisfies reference to documents for adjacent phases of learning
- enable learners to participate successfully in the senior phase of learning with the aim of gaining the award of the Senior Certificate.

### **Kinds of knowledge**

Syllabus development does take account of appropriate kinds of knowledge such as:

- declarative (or propositional) knowledge
- procedural knowledge
- conditional (or contextual) knowledge.

Declarative knowledge, is **knowing about** facts, impressions and procedures, and **knowing that** certain principles hold.

Procedural knowledge, is **knowing how** to do something, or **knowing how** to use declarative knowledge.

Conditional (or contextual) knowledge, is **knowing when, where and why** to use or **knowing when, where and why** to apply declarative or procedural knowledge.

These kinds of knowledge:

- reinforce each other
- all contribute to lifelong learning with the knowledge, practices and dispositions to be able to imagine and choose between different futures.

This framework envisages the kind of learner who:

- will be able to manipulate and critically challenge given information and how it is represented
- can continue to construct new knowledge.

Learners, demonstrating the types of knowledge described above, construct new knowledge on the basis of prior knowledge. The broader the knowledge base the more readily new experiences and information can be assimilated to create new knowledge.

The learner becomes an active agent in constructing personal knowledge, either from a bank of facts and examples, or from given theory. Learners can be encouraged to question information that is presented to them. When a learner applies knowledge that has been reflected upon critically, personal and social wisdom results.

## **Cross-curricular priorities**

While the descriptions of what Queensland's young people should know about and do with what they know typically occur in syllabuses and guidelines for particular study areas, there are priorities across study areas such as literacy, numeracy, life skills, futures perspective, work education, key competencies, technological competencies and employability skills which must be considered.

QSA curriculum material must take into account that some of these priorities, such as literacy and numeracy, are continuous throughout all phases of learning while others, such as key competencies and employability skills, take on increasing focus in later years.

# Assessing

## Monitoring phases of learning

Different phases of learning bring different emphases on assessing and reporting. Syllabuses are based on underlying beliefs which also inform how teachers monitor progress along the learning continuum. Such monitoring addresses the varying needs of individual learners and enables teachers to plan effective courses of study. The beliefs are:

- learnings should be of increasing complexity as young people progress along learning continua
- all young people learn and can demonstrate progress
- young people progress at different rates
- outcomes of learning can be based on different content and contexts
- monitoring of learning involves making judgments about young people's work
- judgments should be made by examining the fullest and latest evidence
- judgments may be communicated in reports, certificates, and qualifications
- judgments about individual young people's learning should be checked at key junctures identified at state and national levels
- records are needed for young people as they move from school to school
- aspects of social justice should be understood and catered for and opportunity to challenge injustice and inequity understood and enacted.

## Early phase of learning

The early years phase of learning is characterised by closer monitoring of progress along fine-grained scales describing such things as reading, writing and foundations of mathematics. *The Learning and Development Framework* is being developed to assist teachers to monitor progress for young learners in this phase of learning.

## Middle phase of learning

The middle phase of learning is characterised by monitoring progress that describes core learning related to increasing complexity of key concepts, organising ideas or key processes. Judgments and reports about progress also include:

- the aspects of literacy and numeracy described by the early years Diagnostic Net
- the sequence of core learning outcomes in key learning area syllabuses
- Year 3, 5, and 7 tests of aspects of literacy and numeracy.

For the middle phase of learning, the syllabuses for the eight nationally agreed key learning areas describe core learnings in six levels.

## Key learning areas

- The Arts
- English
- Health and Physical Education (HPE)
- Languages other than English (LOTE)
- Mathematics

- Science
- Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE)
- Technology

Additional discretionary learning outcomes may be described for these levels, as well as 'Beyond Level 6'. 'Foundation level statements' allow specific learning outcomes to be written for learners who are not yet demonstrating level 1 core learning outcomes.

### **Senior phase of learning**

The senior phase of learning is characterised by:

- increased attention to judgments about the quality of achievements
- specific competencies to match young people's capabilities and aspirations to employment or further education and training.

For the senior phase of learning, the syllabuses for subjects and study areas describe criteria and standards for five exit levels of achievement.

Vocational certificate courses describe specific units of competency for attainment of industry qualifications described under the *Australian Qualifications Framework*. Achievements in this phase of learning may lead to the award of the Senior Certificate.

### **Building consistency of teacher judgment**

Assessing is the systematic, continuing collection of information, and its use in making judgments about demonstrations of learning and quality of achievement. Research shows that criteria for assessment should:

- cover all the important aspects of literacy and numeracy needed for further learning
- provide useful information about students' knowledge and capabilities
- provide information that helps in planning the further learning of individual students
- stimulate teachers to better practice
- motivate students
- provide students with experiences of success to build self-confidence
- cater for individuals' different backgrounds, developments and needs
- provide fair and equal opportunity for students to show what they know and what they can do
- depend, not on an assessment that occurs just once, but instead on a picture built up over a longer time
- go beyond paper-and-pencil tests to use other equipment and ways of communication
- support public confidence in the quality of the information obtained.

Judgments about demonstrations of learning need to be based on criteria or anticipated evidence that are:

- valid
- applied consistently.

Judging is a process of comparing evidence against descriptions of the planned learning, criteria, exemplars or other established referents. Evidence related to demonstration of

expected learning is gathered and judgments made about those demonstrations. Evidence that supports a particular judgment must not be overlooked, and evidence that does not relate to the expected learning must not be included.

For there to be consistency of teacher judgments there needs to be:

- similarities of interpretations of syllabuses
- comparability of curriculum programs.

These in turn are underpinned by principles of professional peer consensus on standards, for example, processes for the senior phase of learning that occur through:

- the operations of state and district review panels
- administrative approval of the QSA
- the cooperation and support of senior secondary schools.

Moderation is the administrative procedures developed by the QSA to ensure comparability of teacher judgments in the senior phase of learning.

While different administrative procedures in the early and middle phases are either in place or evolving within different school authorities and regional jurisdictions, they are based on the same principles of professional peer consensus and administrative approval as those used in the senior secondary schools.

## Reporting

Reporting is a process of indicating judgments about learning, the basis for those judgments, and the contexts in which the learning was demonstrated. It may be either:

- continuous
- related to specific episodes of learning.

Reporting conveys information about:

- progress along the learning continuum
- particular achievements or competencies.

It can involve a variety of:

- audiences
- learners
- parents/caregivers
- other teachers
- school systems; and
- the community (when appropriate).

The juncture between assessing and reporting is one that the QSA explores in partnership with schools. It provides a research platform and offer possible solutions.



## Keeping records

Schools and school systems must keep records of young people's demonstrations of learning. These records include:

- copies of reports and test data
- tracking of learning outcomes
- choices of subjects, courses of study or other curriculum organisers
- descriptions of individual aptitudes and capabilities
- other activities or involvements that are valued by a school community.

## Testing

Statewide tests/tasks provide data at junctures that may be used for:

- individual and/or cohort data about specific aspects of outcomes of learning, including aspects of literacy and numeracy
- identifying young people who would benefit from intervention/learning support
- moderating school-based assessment.

QSA tests are based on QSA syllabuses or elements that are common across syllabuses and guidelines.

## Certification

Certification is the process which:

- collects data
- records results on an official document.

Results in approved studies, including VET, in Years 11 and 12 are recorded on the Senior Certificate, which is issued to a student on completion of Year 12 in full-time schooling.

Statewide rank order information of overall achievement for students who meet eligibility requirements is reported on the Tertiary Entrance Statement, issued at the same time as the Senior Certificate.

Subject results and the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test result recorded on the Senior Certificate are in the nature of absolute achievement — where a student's achievement is matched against a set of prescribed criteria and associated with one of five standards.

Results in VET units of competency are demonstrated achievement judged against nationally endorsed competency standards.

On the Tertiary Entrance Statement, the Overall Position (OP) and Field Positions (FPs) are expressed in relative terms — as rank order positions. The OP, a single piece of information, represents relative overall achievement. Overall Positions provide a comparison of students across the State in terms of their overall achievement in senior studies.

## Relationship with schools

The QSA can best develop an educational vision for Queensland students by signalling its long-term role in statewide curriculum through its Studies Framework. To do this the Authority has identified the phases of learning that syllabuses will guide. Learning is identified as being a continuum from preschool to Year 12 (P–12), articulation from one suite of syllabuses and guidelines to the next will be evident and based on educational values and principles appropriate across the learning phases.

The *Queensland Studies Framework* recognises that the relationship between teachers and their students is central to learning. Learning involves people making sense of:

- their experiences of themselves
- their physical and social environments.

Teachers in schools are the main planners of curriculum programs, but there are other planners and educators. Curriculum planners include officers in:

- schools of distance education
- virtual schools
- hospitals and other institutions
- non school settings engaged in preparing support materials.

In the senior phase of learning when schools seek certification for their students, the QSA's role is different, as part of the certification process requires schools to undertake a series of actions to assure the comparability of students' work within a system of school-based assessment.

Partnerships with schools enable the QSA to enlist the help of identified groups on important matters such as:

- demographic trends
- syllabus directions
- approaches to curriculum
- monitoring outcomes of learning
- professional development for teachers
- pathways and studies options for young people
- tertiary entrance and entering employment.

Schools are responsible for carrying out the curriculum, but QSA must continue to develop robust products and services so that the intended curriculum as described in its approved and accredited syllabuses and guidelines can be put into practice.

## **Strategic priorities (from the QSA's 2004–2006 Strategic Plan)**

The priorities in the QSA's Strategic Plan, especially priorities 1 and 2, position QSA as a partner with schools seeking, choosing and implementing any of its studies, products and services. The following are the six strategic priorities.

### **Strategic priority 1: Educational leadership**

Demonstrate educational leadership informed and supported by cross-sector collaboration

### **Strategic priority 2: Partnerships**

Collaborate with key partners for improved cross sector educational outcomes

### **Strategic priority 3: Consultation**

Enhance QSA community engagement, communication and participation processes

### **Strategic priority 4: Capability**

Network QSA capability development, support and reach

### **Strategic priority 5: Sustainability**

Strengthen QSA corporate governance and organisational development

### **Strategic priority 6: Reporting**

Achieve brand recognition for QSA reporting, publishing and product quality.