

Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning

A proposed blueprint
for the future development
of syllabuses

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Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning — a proposed blueprint for the future development of syllabuses

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Foreword

Since 2000, significant reforms have reshaped education. A target of 88 per cent has been set for Year 12 completion, legislation has increased the school leaving age and a new qualification, the Queensland Certificate of Education, requires an agreed amount of learning to set standards, including achievements in literacy and numeracy.

Collectively the reforms send a clear message about the importance of twelve years of schooling or its equivalent for all young people.

There is a huge weight of expectation on the senior phase of learning. The general community is intensely interested in what happens in schools. Almost every week the media carries a story about what young people are doing at school. Specific subjects are criticised; reports of the outcomes for Year 12 students are analysed.

It is timely to consider what learning is needed to engage all students and encourage them to achieve.

In June 2005, the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) began a review of syllabuses for the senior phase of learning.

Research and consultation undertaken since October 2005 indicate that some of our current arrangements do not equip students to meet the challenges they will face in the foreseeable future. We need a clear and explicit framework for the development and evolution of syllabuses that set broad goals for, and allow sufficient flexibility in, implementation to cater for the various demands now made both by and on students.

The proposed blueprint sets out four interconnected principles to inform the future development of syllabuses: coherence, rigour, flexibility and connections. For each principle there is a proposal that suggests how the principle could be achieved.

The proposals are not for a revolution but an evolution – an evolution that takes us in a more structured, focused and planned direction than has been the case in the past. The blueprint provides an overarching plan within which incremental change can occur.

The consultation on the blueprint will continue for most of this year, with a position being finalised in 2007.

This review is an opportunity to build on the best we have developed and make it better, resolve some anomalies and make the syllabuses responsive to the 21st century challenges. I encourage you to engage in the debate as we critically reflect on what currently exists and how we take this into the future.

Professor John Dewar, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)
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Chair, Review of Syllabuses Reference Group

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Executive summary

Over the last 33 years, Queensland's system of school-based curriculum planning and assessing has evolved to meet the changing needs of students, society and the economy.

This system, based on the experience of teachers and built around local flexibility, collaboration and consultation, has maintained community expectations of accountability, authentic assessment and certification of student achievements.

During this time, revision and development of syllabuses has occurred within a broad frame of reference characterised by two categories of subjects — subjects that contribute to tertiary entrance (Authority subjects) and subjects that do not contribute to tertiary entrance (Authority-registered subjects). These categories and the range within them are now too broad to meet either the demands of today's post-school destinations or the learning needs of students required to participate in the senior phase.

There is now a different set of imperatives impacting on senior schooling:

- the Youth Participation in Education and Training Act (YPET) (2003), increasing the school leaving age
- the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), requiring a significant amount of learning to set standards, including achievements in literacy and numeracy
- the Australian Government projects, seeking greater consistency in schooling and standards in senior secondary subjects across Australia
- the concerns raised by social commentators in the media about the content and standards in the senior secondary curriculum.

As we move closer to near universal participation in the final years of formal schooling what young people should know and be able to do at the end of twelve years' schooling is of great public interest. Our syllabuses, the way they are implemented, and the way they prepare young people for the demands of the 21st century, are open for scrutiny.

In this context it is timely to think about learning in senior secondary education and to develop a more comprehensive framework against which every syllabus and the resulting curriculum would be referenced. Such a framework would provide a conscious and public articulation of the desired knowledge and skill requirements for all learners in the senior phase and be the starting point for the development or revision of all syllabuses. It should also reflect the purposes for senior schooling agreed to during consultation:

- continuing the development of the whole person begun in the compulsory schooling phase
- preparing young people for a range of post-school destinations in further education, training, work and adult life.

The current broad frame of reference for the development of subjects and the resulting curriculum does not provide us with a framework within which we can respond to the issues that have been raised in consultation and research, including:

- the disjuncture between the Years 1 to 10 curriculum designed around eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and the almost eighty specialist subjects in Years 11 and 12 (see Appendix), with particular concerns about subject combinations, depth and breadth of study, balance across what is studied and the implications for a Prep to Year 12 approach
- the need for greater consistency across the broad range of subjects so that we can be assured that all students leave school having mastered the basics of reading, writing, numeracy, an adequate level of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy and the understandings and skills necessary to function as engaged and active citizens and workers
- the influence of the Overall Position (OP) on the design and style of syllabuses
- the way knowledge is being reshaped in the 21st century
- the sustainability of maintaining an ever-increasing number of subjects and the implications for quality, consistency and resourcing for schools and the QSA.

Part 2 of this blueprint describes four interconnected principles for the development of all syllabuses. The principles reflect the community's expectations of what learners in the senior phase of learning should experience. For each principle there is a proposal suggesting how the principle could be achieved.

The assumptions that underpin the principles and inform the proposals are that the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning should:

- make available opportunities for depth and breadth of learning
- include the sort of learning that should be emphasised in the 21st century
- allow for flexibility, so that schools can offer quality programs for all young people
- value different kinds of learning and knowledge
- create a sustainable system that ensures continuing quality and consistency.

When taken together, the syllabuses should form a curriculum offering:

- a learning continuum from Prep to Year 12
- opportunities for balance across the learning undertaken in the final years of formal schooling.

A unifying thread running through all the principles is that the senior phase of learning should provide learning options that engage all young people.

Principle 1: Coherence

The principle of coherence argues for syllabus design that builds a continuum of learning from Prep to Year 12, allows for depth, breadth and balance of learning, develops the learning necessary for the 21st century and provides a fluid and responsive way to include new and emerging areas of knowledge. The proposal is to build coherence through curriculum frameworks in which existing QSA syllabuses are clustered into fields of learning.

Principle 2: Rigour

The principle of rigour argues for a more consistent approach to syllabus design, and for greater clarity about learning that must be taught and assessed. The proposal is to build rigour through all syllabuses to include how decisions about content and sequencing are made, generic elements, mandatory requirements and assessment that reinforce learning for the 21st century.

Principle 3: Flexibility

The principle of flexibility argues for syllabus design that allows schools to be responsive and adaptive, to diversify the courses and programs they offer to meet the needs of their community and to allow students to make good choices about breadth and depth of learning. The proposal is to build flexibility through a syllabus design that opens up possibilities for different study patterns while still offering an integrated and focused program with clear directions in the learning.

Principle 4: Connections

The principle of connections relates to the transition points in a student's learning journey. It is when one phase of learning starts to overlap with the next phase and describes how current learning should be connected with the learning that has gone before and with the learning in the future. The proposal is to build connections through a syllabus design that includes explicit advice and guidance connecting the learning in the senior phase with past learning in Prep to Year 10 and future learning in further education, training, work and adult life.

The principles and proposals in this blueprint are the beginning of a process to develop some desirable long-term commitments for the syllabuses for senior secondary schooling. They provide a comprehensive overarching framework in which future development can take place in a structured, focused and planned way. Once agreement is reached on the underpinning commitments then agreement will be sought on the staged implementation of any changes to the current arrangements.

About this blueprint

This blueprint describes the principles and proposals for a blueprint for the development of future syllabuses for the senior phase of learning.

The decision to review the Queensland Studies Authority¹ (QSA) syllabuses in the senior phase of learning was foreshadowed in the suite of reforms — Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF). These reforms are designed to encourage more young Queenslanders to complete school successfully and move on to rewarding post-school pathways.

This review of the QSA's syllabuses is to ensure the syllabuses:

- meet the needs of students and are relevant to their futures
- provide options for flexible delivery in terms of time and location
- meet the expectations of the community, employers, universities and training providers.

This review seeks the co-operation of all stakeholders working together to develop appropriate learning for the senior phase of learning that meet the needs of all students, the community, employers, further education and training providers and universities.

How to make your voice heard

Consultation on this blueprint is open till 15 December 2006.

The QSA wants to hear your views on the principles and proposals described in Part 2 of this blueprint.

Questions to stimulate and guide discussion are at the end of the blueprint. We invite you to respond to these questions and to raise others. Your responses will guide the QSA in the development of a final proposal for a way forward.

To make sure we do hear your views, you can:

- send a personal response
- contribute to a response from a particular school, group or association.

For details, check the QSA website at www.qsa.qld.edu.au

It will greatly assist us if your response: includes your name, a brief description of the capacity in which you write (e.g. teacher, parent, small-business owner, association representative, student) and contact details so that a reply can be arranged if appropriate.

Email	Electronic responses should be sent by email to: syllabusreview@qsa.qld.edu.au
Fax	Faxes should be sent to (07) 3221 2553.
Mail	Written submissions should be sent to: The Review of Syllabuses Project, Queensland Studies Authority, PO Box 307 Spring Hill Qld 4004.
Telephone	If you have any questions about the process, please call Janice Chee on (07) 3864 0457.

¹ The Queensland Studies Authority is a statutory body established under the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002. The QSA has responsibility for the development, review and approval of preschool guidelines and syllabuses for Years 1 to 12, as well as the development of professional resources for teachers to support the implementation of relevant guidelines and syllabuses. It is also responsible for testing, assessment and moderation and certification of Queensland students, and the facilitation of tertiary entrance procedures.

What happens next?

After consultations on this draft, a blueprint for the future will be developed. This will include:

- the structure for Senior syllabuses that cover the areas of knowledge appropriate for inclusion in the senior phase of learning
- the design principles for future syllabus development that take advantage of the flexibilities that the QCE enables
- criteria for the evaluation and maintenance of Senior syllabuses into the future.

Part 1

Rationale: Strengthening Queensland's approach to senior schooling

Queensland has a long history of adapting its syllabuses and curriculum materials to keep pace with the needs of students and contribute to an education system that is responsive to the changing demands of society and the economy.

Over the last 30 years, the current syllabuses and the curriculum they collectively represent for Years 11 and 12 have developed within a broad frame of reference characterised by two categories of subjects – subjects that contribute to tertiary entrance (Authority subjects) and subjects that do not contribute to tertiary entrance (Authority-registered subjects). These categories and the range within these categories are now too broad to meet either the demands of today's post-school destinations or the learning needs of students required to participate in the senior phase.

There is now a different set of imperatives impacting on senior schooling that requires a more comprehensive framework against which every syllabus and the resulting curriculum would be referenced. Such a framework would provide a conscious and public articulation of the desired knowledge and skill requirements for all learners in the senior phase and be the starting point for the development or revision of all subjects.

Changed conditions – building a smarter State

Since 2000, Queensland has been reshaping education to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. More than ever, getting an education is vital for personal health and wellbeing as well as for the social, political and economic health of a community.

The goal is for more young people to complete Year 12 or its equivalent as this offers the best foundation for access to, and success in, further learning, training, work and adult life.

To achieve this goal, the Queensland Government has introduced two significant changes to education of young people in the senior phase of learning.

- The Youth Participation in Education and Training Act (YPET) (2003) has increased the school leaving age and requires young people to participate in education and training beyond Year 10.
- The Queensland Certificate of Education – a new qualification requiring an agreed amount of learning to set standards, including achievements in literacy and numeracy.

The legislation and the QCE create a new context for senior secondary education. They “raise the bar”. We now expect all young people to participate in the senior phase, and to learn and achieve more. This means that our syllabuses must provide suitable opportunities for all learners.

National debate – consistency and standards

The Australian Government has initiated projects to enhance national consistency in senior secondary schooling. The desirability of a common Year 12 Australian Certificate of Education (ACE), based on nationally consistent high standards in the knowledge and skills required for life and work beyond school, is currently open for public comment.

Complementing this, an independent study has been commissioned to examine the content and standards in Year 12 English, Australian History, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry across Australia. This study reflects the concerns raised by a number of commentators in the media about the content and standards in the senior secondary curriculums.

What young people should know and be able to do at the end of twelve years schooling is of great public interest. Our syllabuses, the way they are implemented, and the way they prepare young people for the demands of the 21st century are open for scrutiny.

Queensland's system

Over the last 33 years, Queensland's system of school-based curriculum planning and assessing has evolved and maintained community expectations of accountability, authentic assessment and certification of student achievements.

This system is underpinned by philosophies that define Queensland's approach to the senior phase of learning. These are:

- schools being adaptive and responsive so that their localised curriculum best meets the needs of their learners and assessment matches their localised curriculum
- flexible curriculum planning, based on similar interpretations of syllabuses, leading to comparable curriculum programs and consistent teacher judgments about demonstrations of learning
- judgments of demonstrations of learning based on: criteria and standards, folios of evidence of learning gathered over time and the fullest and latest evidence
- teacher ownership through: panel-based moderation that provides on-going advice to schools on their application of standards in assessment and active engagement of teachers and the education community in the review and development of syllabuses.

This tradition of local flexibility, collaboration and consultation, drawing on the experience of teachers, schools and the broader education community, continues to inform the development of Queensland's syllabuses to better align with the educational needs of young people in a rapidly changing society and economy. Future arrangements will build on current best practice and enhance standards and quality.

Senior schooling — high expectations for all young people

In 1982, just under 40 per cent of 17-year-olds in Queensland completed twelve years of schooling and received a Senior Certificate. In 2000, Government set a target for 88 per cent Year 12 completion by 2010. As we move closer to near universal participation in the final years of school we must reflect critically on the purpose of senior schooling.

Consultation confirmed that:

- senior schooling should continue the process of developing the whole person begun in the compulsory schooling phase. Given this, we must consider what range of capabilities must continue to be developed to enable productive engagement in civic and community life, work and personal relationships — as a more mature learner
- senior schooling is also concerned with preparing young people for a range of post-school destinations in further education, training, work and adult life. Given this, we must consider:
 - what knowledge and skills young people will need in knowledge-based economies and societies
 - how we prepare all students so that they can increase their skills and learn new skills on a regular basis and are able to engage with the economic, social and political issues that arise in the face of new technologies and the changing nature of work.

If completing Year 12 is a goal for all young people, then we must consider the whole learning journey from Prep to Year 12 and the extent to which young people perceive the school curriculum to be relevant to their interests and aspirations. Research and consultation indicate that the senior phase must provide all young people with access to

and success in a curriculum that delivers clear benefits in the form of increased chances of being able to pursue desired employment, education and training.

Syllabuses for the future — a comprehensive framework

The challenge for future syllabus design is to increase engagement in learning for all students and maintain high standards and rigour. We need new ways of thinking about the sort of formal learning program required for all young people in the 21st century. The current broad frame of reference for the development of subjects and the resulting curriculum does not provide us with a framework within which we can respond to the issues that have been raised in consultation and research. A summary of those findings can be found in Appendix 2.

We must reflect critically on whether the current organisation of the curriculum provides all students with the educational capital that will enable them to make best use of life's opportunities. Currently, the curriculum for Years 1 to 10 is designed around eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs). In Years 11 and 12, schools develop their curriculum from nearly eighty specialist subjects (see Appendix 1). Students then select five or six subjects according to the availability on the timetable. For most students continuing at school these subjects are completed in the same way, that is, over two years.

The work of the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) framework initiative will identify essential learnings and standards for Years 1 to 10 and so provide a starting point for strengthening the link between Year 10 and Year 11. However, how we move toward a Prep to Year 12 approach to learning and match the curriculum to the purposes of senior schooling, requires consideration of how we encourage greater continuity and opportunities for both depth and breadth of learning.

- Allowing students to select any combination of subjects in Year 11 that their school offers is based on an assumption that choice can be exercised and that the outcomes will be comparable. Yet research shows that the subjects students choose in the final years of school can and do have a significant influence on the education and career options available to them after finishing school.
- At the same time, there is no means to ensure a balance across what is studied or to ensure breadth of study. This is at odds with the goal of continuing a broad and general education into the senior years of schooling, which was strongly expressed at consultation.
- Young people are required to participate in education or training beyond Year 10. In this context we have a responsibility to ensure that all students leave school having mastered the basics of reading, writing and numeracy and with an adequate level of ICT literacy. We also have a responsibility to ensure that students leave school with the understandings and skills necessary to function as engaged and active citizens and with skills and experiences relevant to workplaces. The analyses of the syllabuses undertaken by Gilbert and Macleod (2006) and by Conley (2005) show that the highly optional nature of the syllabuses is problematic, as it is difficult to identify experiences which all learners can reasonably be expected to have in the course of study. (These analyses are available at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/)
- The senior phase prepares students for a range of tertiary education and training opportunities. In the Next Step Report 2005, almost 68 per cent of Year 12 completers continued in some recognised form of education and training in the year after leaving school. Of this group, almost as many were studying vocational education and training as university degrees (30.8 per cent and 36.6 per cent respectively).

In designing future syllabuses we should examine the extent to which the requirements for the Overall Position (OP) dictate the design and style of syllabuses: requiring courses to be arranged as four sequential semesters and completed over two years. This assumes that all students will start and finish the course and that it is done in the desired order. However, it is already the case that some schools offer composite classes in which some students do semesters 3 and 4 before doing semesters 1 and 2.

Many students do not complete four semesters. Future syllabuses must ensure that students achieve meaningful outcomes if they undertake less than four semesters in a particular course and offer schools practical learning solutions if composite classes are necessary.

- A key to increasing participation and engagement in the senior phase of learning is through curriculum and assessment arrangements designed for high-quality outcomes for all students. All students participating in the senior years of school should be given opportunities to develop deep understandings of subject matter, develop high-level skills and have opportunities to transfer and apply those understandings and skills in a range of contexts.

This review must consider how knowledge is being reshaped in the 21st century. Conventional binaries separating academic from vocational and theory from practice have outlived their usefulness. Schools already have students in the same class group doing different courses in similar areas of learning, for example Business Communication and Technology (an Authority subject) and Business (an Authority-registered subject). The syllabus design in the subject Aerospace combines theoretical and applied learning. This review must challenge old mindsets that some subjects are academic and others are vocational and that different syllabus design will result in a “dumbing down”. These views are simply not helpful in addressing the challenges of new times.

- A future framework must confront issues of sustainability. We must consider whether there are too many syllabuses and the implications for quality, consistency and resourcing for schools and the QSA. Further, we need to question how we include new areas of knowledge in the suite of syllabuses and whether it is practical to continue to add more two-year courses of study, categorised as Authority or Authority-registered subjects in very specialised areas of learning. It is timely to consider whether there are other ways of accommodating specialisation and the inclusion of new areas of knowledge that will sit well with Queensland’s system of school-based curriculum planning and assessment.

If we agree that the senior phase of learning is for all young people and its purpose is to prepare them for future roles as citizens and workers, then what does this mean for a future curriculum framework in terms of:

- balance between a broad general education and highly specialised programs of study
- depth and breadth of learning
- the sort of learning that should be emphasised for all learners
- the flexibilities that schools need to offer quality programs for all young people
- valuing different kinds of learning
- sustainability.

The principles and proposals in this blueprint are the beginning of a process to develop some desirable long-term commitments for the syllabuses in the final years of formal schooling. They provide a comprehensive overarching framework in which future development can take place in a structured, focused and planned way.

Once agreement is reached on the underpinning commitments then agreement will be sought on the staged implementation of any changes to the current arrangements.

Part 2

Principles and proposals for the future development of syllabuses

This blueprint proposes four interconnected principles to inform the development of all syllabuses. The principles reflect the community's expectations of what learners in the senior phase of learning should experience. For each principle there is a proposal suggesting how the principle could be achieved.

A unifying thread that runs through all the principles is that the senior phase of learning should provide learning options that engage all young people.

The assumptions that underpin the principles and inform the proposals are that the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning should:

- make available opportunities for depth and breadth of learning
- include the sort of learning that should be emphasised in the 21st century
- allow for flexibility, so that schools can offer quality programs for all young people
- value different kinds of learning and knowledge
- create a sustainable system that ensures continuing quality and consistency.

When taken together, the syllabuses should form an overall curriculum that will:

- create a learning continuum from Prep to Year 12
- make available opportunities for balance across the learning undertaken in the final years of formal schooling.

Principle 1: Coherence

This principle argues for syllabus design that builds a continuum of learning from Prep to Year 12, allows for depth, breadth and balance of learning, develops the learning necessary for the 21st century and provides a fluid and responsive way to include new and emerging areas of knowledge. The proposal is to build coherence through curriculum frameworks in which existing QSA syllabuses are clustered into fields of learning.

Principle 2: Rigour

This principle argues for a more consistent approach to syllabus design, and for greater clarity about learning that must be taught and assessed. The proposal is to build rigour through all syllabuses to include how decisions about content and sequencing are made, generic elements, mandatory requirements and assessment that reinforce learning for the 21st century.

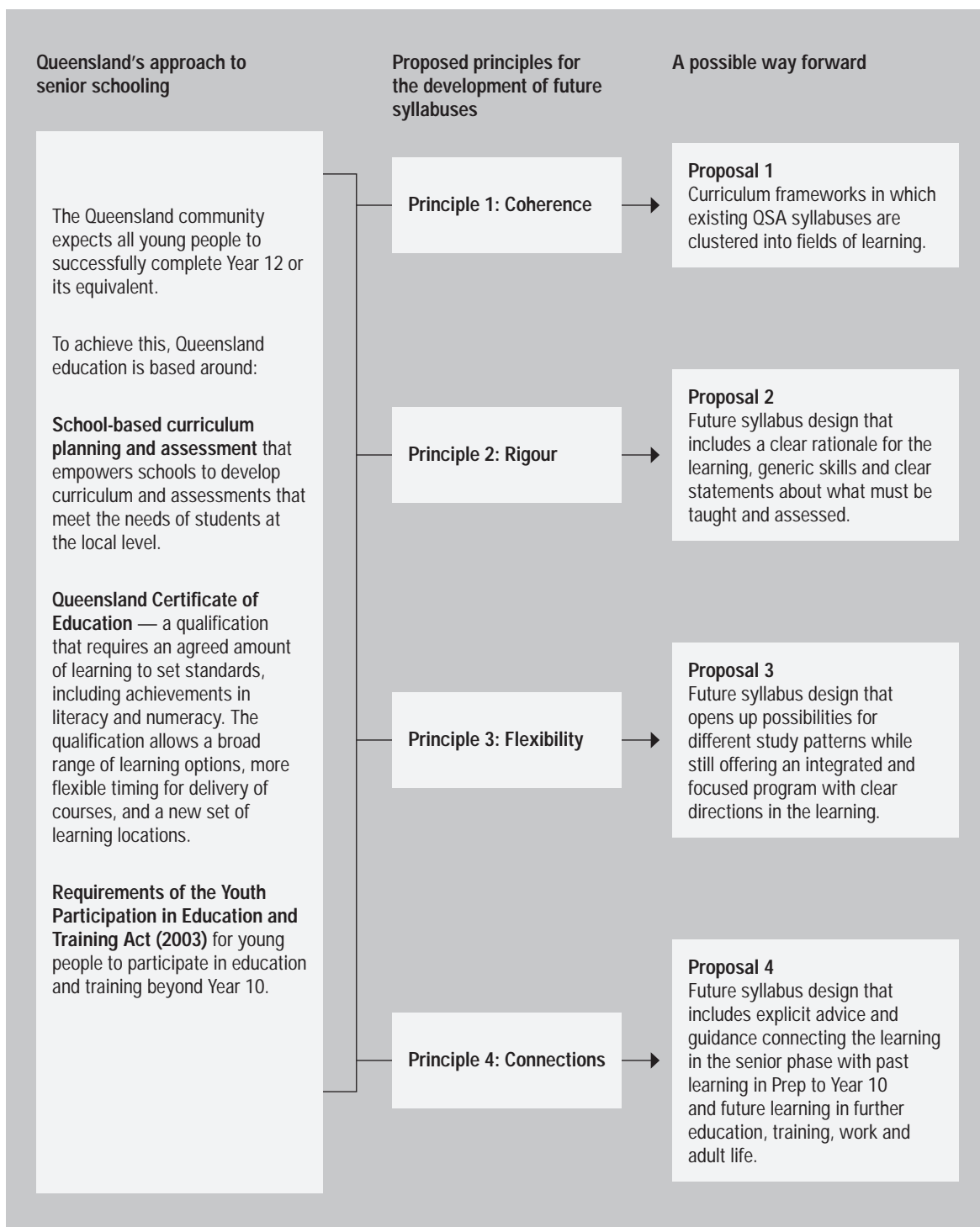
Principle 3: Flexibility

This principle argues for syllabus design that allows schools to be responsive and adaptive, to diversify the courses and programs they offer to meet the needs of their community and to allow students to make good choices about breadth and depth of learning. The proposal is to build flexibility through a syllabus design that opens up possibilities for different study patterns while still offering an integrated and focused program with clear directions in the learning.

Principle 4: Connections

This principle relates to the transition points in a student’s learning journey. It is when one phase of learning starts to overlap with the next phase and describes how current learning should be connected with the learning that has gone before and with the learning in the future. The proposal is to build connections through a syllabus design that includes explicit advice and guidance connecting the learning in the senior phase with past learning in Prep to Year 10 and future learning in further education, training, work and adult life.

Proposed blueprint



Principle 1: Coherence

The principle of coherence argues for syllabus design that builds a continuum of learning from Prep to Year 12, allows for depth, breadth and balance of learning, recognises the learning necessary for the 21st century and provides a way to include new and emerging areas of knowledge.

PROPOSAL 1

To build coherence through curriculum frameworks in which existing QSA syllabuses are clustered into fields of learning.

What is a field of learning?

A field of learning is a curriculum organiser built by clustering learning in related areas. A field could be organised around a discipline, a pathway or other frameworks such as the Australian Standard Classification of Education Definitions (ASCED) used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Ideally, a field would show an explicit connection with a related KLA.

A field includes learning that is theoretical and applied. Within a field, different study patterns sequence learning in a meaningful way. Study patterns describe options for:

- increasing complexity
- specialisation
- different exit points
- requirements for post-school destinations.

Learning sequenced within a study pattern could be described as either:

- foundation and extension studies; or
- level 1 and level 2 studies; or
- minor and major studies; or
- strands and electives.

The idea of curriculum organisers is not new. For example, the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and the Study Area Specifications are ways of organising the curriculum to focus teaching and learning.

If the proposal for fields of learning is accepted, then how the fields are organised would need further investigation, consultation and negotiation. Following this, the current syllabuses could be clustered into fields with further work on the study patterns being undertaken as part of the normal review cycle for syllabuses.

Example of different ways of building fields of learning

Possible fields of learning, clustering current QSA syllabuses	DISCIPLINE	Science	This could include: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Earth Science, Multi-Strand Science, Science 21, Agricultural Science, Agriculture & Horticulture, Marine Studies, Marine & Aquatic Practices
		English	English language, learning and literacy This could include: English, Literature, English Communication, Functional English or English communication This could include: English, Literature, English Communication, Functional English, Film & Television.
	PATHWAY	Business	This could include: Accounting, Economics, Legal Studies, Business Communication & Technology, Business Operations & Management, Business Studies, and elements of Information & Communications Technology.

Why fields of learning?

A fields of learning approach provides an enabling framework that:

- **builds a continuum of learning over the full twelve years of schooling**
 - More young people are expected to complete Year 12 or its equivalent as this is the best foundation for further education, training, work and adult life.
 - Currently in Years 1 to 10, students undertake a broad and general education in eight KLAs. For the final two years of formal schooling, students select from a wide range of specialist subjects.
 - Some subjects in Years 11 and 12 have a tight link to the KLAs and build an obvious and meaningful sequence of study from Prep to Year 12. The learning sequence for other subject combinations is less clear.
 - Syllabuses organised into fields of learning would cluster related learning together and have an explicit link to a KLA, thus building a tighter sequence of learning that develops naturally from Prep to Year 12.
- **allows for depth and breadth of learning**
 - The study patterns within fields allow learners to make decisions about depth and breadth of study. Not all learning would need to be undertaken over the full two years. Having different study patterns is described in greater depth in Proposal 3.
- **promotes balance of learning**
 - We believe that young people should leave school with understandings and skills necessary to function as engaged and active citizens, and with skills and experiences relevant for workplaces.
 - We know that the subjects chosen for the final years of formal schooling have a significant influence on the education and career options available after completing school. We also know that some combinations of subjects provide better preparation than other combinations. However, there are few, if any, guidelines on building a program of study that balances what is studied for the senior phase of learning.
 - A fields of learning approach presents the curriculum as areas of learning rather than subjects. Learners could select a number of fields and balance their learning.
- **develops the learning necessary for the 21st century**
 - Learning identified for the 21st century integrates thinking and performance and theory and practice.
 - The subjects of the future must include opportunities for all students to develop deep understandings of subject matter and high level skills.
 - In this context, we must consider the opportunity cost for learners of continuing to have two categories of subject – Authority and Authority-registered.
 - Rather than a number of subjects that may have very different status in the same area of learning, fields of learning would:
 - offer study patterns that are challenging and relevant for all learners in the senior phase
 - build on different aspects of learning in the same area of learning
 - capitalise on the strengths in current Authority and Authority-registered subjects in related areas
 - allow students and the community to see how knowledge is related and linked.

» The range of subjects available depends on decisions made by schools based on their resourcing and local needs.

» The Learning for the 21st Century report (2006 p.4). states that the focus on core subjects: English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, arts, history and geography "must expand beyond basic competency to the understanding of core academic content at much higher levels".

» Peter Freebody describes the "dual mandate of disciplinarity or how the practical and the conceptual work together". Freebody asserts that disciplinarity is "a goal in globalised times". (2006 pp.10, 18, 22).

» Dave Turner, at the Schooling for the 21st Century conference in September 2005 said it was time to "vocalise the academic and intellectualise the vocational".

»» Recent reviews in South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the United Kingdom have highlighted the need to address the division between conceptual and applied learning.

»» Traditional disciplines are now linked with contemporary knowledge and skills such as information technology, design or enterprise to form new knowledges such as bioinformatics, creative enterprise, biomedical science or nano-technologies.

- **provides a fluid and responsive way to include new and emerging areas of knowledge**
 - We have to acknowledge the ongoing growth of knowledge and reconfiguration of knowledge. Disciplines are dynamic; they shift and change. Often it is the way knowledge is used in the real world that causes it to change.
 - Fields of learning offer a framework that is responsive to changing needs. It is a sustainable way of progressively including new areas of knowledge or new configurations of knowledge because learning does not have to be structured as a two-year course of study. In this way, fields have the capacity to manage the inclusion of new areas of learning yet avoid proliferation.

PROPOSAL 1

To build coherence through curriculum frameworks in which existing QSA syllabuses are clustered into fields of learning.

To achieve this we could:

- 1.1 Build fields of learning built on disciplines, pathways or other forms of classification to:
 - build a continuum of learning over the full twelve years of schooling
 - allow for depth and breadth of learning
 - promote balance of learning
 - develop the learning necessary for the 21st century
 - provide a fluid and responsive way to include new and emerging

Principle 2: Rigour

The principle of rigour argues for a more consistent approach to syllabus design, and for greater clarity about learning that must be taught and assessed. This principle calls for a fundamental frame of reference that informs the development of all syllabuses.

Regardless of subject selection and preferred pathway, all young people should have an opportunity to learn content, engage in learning experiences and undertake assessment that is agreed to be important for all students completing twelve years of schooling. Courses of study, developed from syllabuses, should encourage all young people to undertake learning that “stretches” them.

PROPOSAL 2

To build rigour through future syllabus design that includes a clear rationale for the learning, generic skills and clear statements about what must be taught and assessed.

>> Both Freebody (2006) and Conley (2005a) question what the frame of reference for the high school curriculum is.

>> The Learning for the 21st Century report (p. 4) states that, “As much as students need knowledge in core subjects, they also need to know how to keep learning continually throughout their lives. Learning skills comprise three broad categories of skills: information and communication skills; thinking and problem solving skills; interpersonal and self-directional skills”.

>> Conley (2005a) describes the necessary skills for all learners as “habits of mind”.

- **clear rationale for decisions about learning and the sequencing of the learning**
 - All syllabuses must have a clear rationale that underpins how decisions about the learning have been made. In many cases, disciplines provide a rationale for the selection of content knowledge and the sequencing of learning experiences. Each discipline sets out distinctive ways of thinking about human activity. Undertaking studies in different disciplines allows students to investigate similar topics and issues from different angles.
 - If the learning is selected and sequenced for a particular post-school destination then the rationale should show how the learning is connected to that destination and the further education and training associated with it.
 - Decision-making about what to include in syllabuses should be transparent, so that the education and general communities have confidence in what young people are learning.
- **generic skills in all syllabuses**
 - Learning is more than the simple acquisition of discrete facts. A recent OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation analysis of knowledge management applies a four-way distinction: know-what; know-how; know-why and know-who. This analysis concluded that there is growing demand for the latter three compared with the more straightforward factual knowledge embodied in know-what.
 - Students need to learn how to apply their understanding in challenging ways. They need to learn how to interpret facts and develop the kinds of higher order thinking skills that are increasingly important in the 21st century.
 - Consultation clearly supported the inclusion of generic skills in all syllabuses that would be explicitly taught and assessed. The skills described as invaluable for all learners during consultation included:
 - Literacy — meaning writing, speaking, listening, reading, comprehending
 - numeracy — meaning fundamental numeric understandings
 - analysing and problem-solving
 - designing and innovating
 - communicating and negotiating
 - using technologies to learn
 - learning to learn and awareness of self as a learner.
 - Learner dispositions required for participation in an increasingly complex society identified during consultation were: leadership, ethics, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, social responsibility, and awareness about health and wellbeing.
 - We need to consider what learning is essential for all students in the final years of formal education and how these can be included in all syllabuses.

» Both Conley (2005a) and Gilbert and Macleod (2006) raise as an issue the considerable areas of choice in the current syllabuses.

» Bransford and Schwartz in Freebody (2006 p.21) argue for assessment which guides a learner to new ways of observing, questioning and interpreting. This is described as assessment that is preparation for future learning.

- **what must be taught**
 - Syllabuses include what is important in terms of the valued learnings, course structures, assessment strategies and techniques, and moderation requirements for student folios of work.
 - Most syllabuses and specifications contain considerable areas of choice in terms of content, learning experiences and assessment. This implies that different choices will nonetheless achieve the same outcomes. However this may not be the case, as different choices may involve not only different information and understandings, but also different thinking, interpersonal skills, ways of participating or organisational skills.
 - Future syllabuses must include clear mandatory requirements to ensure that learners have opportunities to engage with topics, principles, laws, concepts, techniques and vocabularies that are generally accepted as essential. There must be explicit guidance about what should be emphasised in the content, the learning experiences and the assessment. This will support teachers to make appropriate judgments about emphasis and time allocation.
- **assessment for the 21st century**
 - Assessment requirements should complement the sort of learning identified as important for the 21st century. This is assessment that:
 - focuses on “preparation for future learning” and guides the learner toward new ways of observing, questioning and interpreting
 - encourages learners to take ever greater ownership of their own learning
 - focuses on research, analysis, critical thinking, preparation of drafts and working towards mastery.

PROPOSAL 2

To build rigour through future syllabus design that includes a clear rationale for the learning, generic skills and clear statements about what must be taught and assessed.

To achieve this we could:

- 2.1 Include a clear rationale for decisions about content selection and sequencing.
- 2.2 Identify generic skills for inclusion in all syllabuses.
- 2.3 Identify the mandatory requirements: topics, principles, rules, laws, techniques, concepts and vocabulary, that are essential and that must be taught and assessed.
- 2.4 Review assessment requirements to ensure assessment supports and complements learning for the 21st century.

Principle 3: Flexibility

The principle of flexibility argues for syllabus design that allows schools to be responsive and adaptive, to diversify the courses and programs they offer to meet the needs of their community and to allow students to make good choices about breadth and depth of learning.

Since 2000, reforms in education have focused on increased engagement in learning and greater responsiveness to learner needs. The senior phase of learning builds on a range of learning from which young people can choose. The range is reflected in the learning that contributes to the QCE: school subjects, vocational education and training, community and work-based learning, university subjects and achievements in areas such as music, dance and sport.

It is vital to ensure that young people seeking an OP can continue to do so. However, those procedures should not exclude or disadvantage young people who want to study Authority subjects for other purposes and over different periods of time. The flexibility principle is about ensuring that all young people can access high quality learning, and that the outcomes of their learning can be achieved at different junctures and used to enhance the full range of post-school options.

Research and consultation reaffirm that flexibility in the senior phase of learning is valued and appropriate. For students, flexibility is likely to encourage greater participation and achievement. For schools, the flexibility in syllabuses must allow for the different ways schools are organised. For both, flexibility only has meaning if the flexibilities result in an integrated and focused program with clear directions in the learning.

PROPOSAL 3

To build flexibility through future syllabus design that opens up possibilities for different study patterns while still offering an integrated and focused program with clear directions in the learning.

>> Gardner (2002 p.27) claims that early school leavers in Year 11 might benefit from greater flexibility to undertake part time study.

>> The OP study pattern is based on 20 semesters of Authority subjects of which at least 12 semesters or 3 subjects must be taken over 4 semesters, that is, the subjects must be completed. In addition, young people must sit the Queensland Core Skills Test.

>> During the consultations, many participants raised concerns that young people are making what amounts to a major life choice at age 15, and that their decisions may be limiting their post-school pathways.

- **different study patterns**
 - The majority of young people select five or six Authority subjects “to keep their options open”, that is, to be eligible for an OP. However, some 70 per cent do not use an OP for entry to tertiary education at university or in vocational education and training. With the introduction of the QCE, learners selecting only Authority subjects may in fact be restricting their options to undertake the full range of learning opportunities available to them.
 - Authority subjects are designed as two-year, four-semester courses. The assumption is that all students will start and end a course at the same time. Same-time-based courses are used for “scaling”, which is essential for the calculation of the OP because it allows comparison of the results in different subjects and from different schools. However, scaling can also be achieved effectively using external examination results or a range of other methods. In addition, even though Authority-registered subjects do not contribute to the OP, they also conform to a syllabus design based on two years and four semesters.
- **an integrated and focused program with clear directions in the learning**
 - The QCE opens up opportunities to think about learning options described as core, preparatory, enrichment or advanced and how learning could be organised that would allow for depth and breadth of learning.
 - We also have a powerful mechanism – the Learning Account - for recording more flexible combinations of learning.

»» The QCE study pattern is based on 20 credits.

Between 12 and 20 credits must come from completed courses of study. That's for depth of study.

Up to 8 credits can come from a range of study. That's for breadth of study.

- **Core courses**
 - The QCE describes a core course as an amount of learning completed over two years of full-time study. These courses require students to demonstrate depth of learning.
- **Preparatory courses**
 - Some learners require preparatory courses that offer them a “fresh start” in the senior phase of learning. There are a number of excellent courses offered by the vocational education and training sector. These courses build basic skills in literacy and numeracy and include job-related skills. The QSA is also developing short courses in literacy and numeracy which will support young people to develop skills to succeed in the senior phase of learning and beyond.
 - What is clear from recent legislation reforms, however, is that more students than ever will be staying at school to complete senior, and they will require preparatory type courses that build knowledge, skills and dispositions that articulate directly to core courses.
- **Enrichment courses**

Short courses could broaden young people's learning options and include:

 - stand-alone short courses, for example, financial literacy, civics and citizenship, career development
 - a short course for independent in-depth study in an area of specialisation requiring the application of learning from a number of subject areas. Such a course would require learners to demonstrate high levels of independence and creativity.
 - a short course developed by a school to meet local needs based on units or electives from different syllabuses.
- **Advanced courses**
 - Some learners are able to access university or high level TAFE courses while they are still at school. This is an excellent opportunity and should be continued.
 - However, we have to consider how we can include challenging “advanced” study for young people in the school context. Currently there is a very limited number of extension subjects that offer enrichment. These could be expanded and modified so there are more opportunities for in-depth, specialised study that “stretches” talented students. Having more extension subjects would mean more learners would have access to “advanced” study at school.
- **Changing courses**
 - For a variety of reasons, young people want to change subjects. We need to consider how we structure learning in syllabuses that would support young people to make good choices about depth and breadth of learning. This could be achieved by describing different study patterns within fields of learning which have different exit points.

»» In 2005, some 19 000 students, about half the cohort, did not complete four semesters of a subject. (QSA data)

PROPOSAL 3

To build flexibility through future syllabus design that opens up possibilities for different study patterns while still offering an integrated and focused program with clear directions in the learning.

To achieve this we could:

- 3.1 Develop syllabuses that include different study patterns and open up possibilities to offer core, preparatory, enrichment and advanced courses catering to the learning needs of a diverse group of young people and attracting different amounts of credit.
- 3.2 Develop syllabuses that allow students to undertake different study patterns for breadth of learning and depth of learning, while still offering an integrated and focused program. This could open up opportunities for young people to set short, medium and long-term learning goals
- 3.3 Develop syllabuses that allow opportunities for tailoring learning in new and creative ways.

Principle 4: Connections

The principle of connections relates to the transition points in a student's learning journey. It is when one phase of learning starts to overlap with the next phase and describes how current learning should be connected with the learning that has gone before and with the learning in the future.

Consultation confirmed that the senior phase of learning must provide a rich environment for developing social maturity as well as preparing students for making life choices. It is a time when young people continue their general education and also get ready to move into adult life and on to work, training or university.

PROPOSAL 4

To build connections through future syllabus design that includes explicit advice and guidance connecting the learning in the senior phase with past learning in Prep to Year 10 and future learning in further education, training, work and adult life.

- **connecting to past learning in Prep to Year 10**
 - Year 10 is a key education juncture. It is both a culmination of one phase of learning and a transition to a new phase.
 - The development of coherence across and within learning described in Proposal 1 would use the essentials identified for Year 9 through the QCAR initiative to make an explicit link with learning in Year 11.
 - In addition, we must also consider that young people in Year 10 are at different stages of their learning journeys and need different programs to build on their strengths and work on their weaknesses as they prepare to move to the senior phase of learning.
 - The purposes of Year 10 and the differing learning needs of young people towards the end of the middle phase of learning were confirmed through consultation:
 - continuation — so that some students can consolidate their studies before beginning their senior program
 - remediation — so that some students struggling to meet Year 9 standards can “catch-up”
 - acceleration — so that some students can begin the senior phase of learning before Year 11. These programs would be designed for two types of students:
 - gifted and talented students ready to begin higher-level studies
 - students who are losing interest in school and are taking part in re-engagement programs
 - specialisation — so that students who have met Year 9 standards have an opportunity to specialise in particular areas — for example, science, arts and sport — before beginning their senior program.
 - Transition notes could provide advice and guidance on best practice programs that support schools and teachers as they develop programs for a range of Year 10 learners.
 - Year 10 is also a planning year. The new legislation requires young people to be registered with the QSA before the end of Year 10 and, if they have successfully completed appropriate learning, they can begin banking credits towards the QCE.
 - The transition from the middle phase to the senior phase could be strengthened by introducing a short course on career development, based on the MCEETYA Australian Blueprint for Career Development. This course could be offered during Year 10 or delivered flexibly over the senior phase. Importantly, it should count as credit towards the QCE. In this way, it sends a message to schools and young people that planning for the senior phase is important and valued.

- **connecting with future learning**
 - In the same way that the learning in Year 11 needs to link with the essential learning and standards established for the end of the middle phase, so the learning in the Year 11 and 12 syllabuses needs to build towards the knowledge and skills required for further education, training, work and active citizenship.
 - While many university courses have ceased to require prerequisite subjects, there is nevertheless an expectation of “assumed knowledge”. More work needs to be done on this through collaboration, not only with higher education providers, but also with training providers and employers.
 - Approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in universities and TAFE have changed. There is greater use of information technologies and online learning, larger classes and higher student/staff ratios. The trend is to more flexible learning environments enabling learners to mix work, study and other commitments. In such circumstances, learners need to be able to operate independently in their learning.
 - Students say that they need to see the relevance of their subjects and how their study is worthwhile for them in the future.
 - Students will see relevance if there is clear articulation from the subjects to further education, training and work. More needs to be done on how the subjects studied at school link with the skills formation strategies developed in the vocational education and training sector. There needs to be a tighter fit with the underpinning knowledge and skills needed for vocational qualifications at certificate level III and above that set young people up for technician and para-professional careers where there is the most rapid jobs growth.
 - All students need to be prepared for life as active citizens in a democratic society. We have a responsibility to build the knowledge and skills for citizenship

» Conley (2005a) and Gilbert and Macleod (2006) discuss the importance of syllabuses developing students' independence and ownership of learning

» English and Mathematics were singled out for their perceived lack of relevance by students interviewed for the Pitman Report (2002 p.211).

PROPOSAL 4

To build connections through future syllabus design that includes explicit advice and guidance connecting the learning in the senior phase with past learning in Prep to Year 10 and future learning in further education, training, work and adult life.

To achieve this we could:

- 4.1 Include explicit links with the essential learning and standards identified by QCAR for Year 9.
- 4.2 Develop transition notes that provide guidance for Year 10 programs, focused on the four purposes of: continuation, acceleration, remediation, and specialisation.
- 4.3 Through stronger collaborative partnerships with higher education, training providers and employers, include explicit advice about the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for success in further education, training and work. This will help young people understand better what they need to achieve and build greater understanding between the education and training sectors and employers.
- 4.4 Include information about the broad careers linked to a field of learning so that young people can see how what they are studying is valid in the real world.
- 4.5 Develop a short course in Career Development that attracts credit for the QCE. The course should include the development of personal skills and learning skills and the development of a senior education and training plan.
- 4.6 Investigate strategies for including knowledge, skills and dispositions for active citizenship.

Questions to guide discussion

The principles and proposals in this blueprint present a broad framework for future syllabus design based on our belief that senior schooling should continue the process begun in the compulsory schooling phase of developing the whole person and that it should also be concerned with preparing all young people for a range of post-school destinations in further education, training, work and adult life.

The assumptions that underpin the principles and proposals are that the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning should:

- make available opportunities for depth and breadth of learning
- include the sort of learning that should be emphasised in the 21st century
- allow for flexibilities so that schools can offer quality programs for all young people
- value different kinds of learning and knowledge
- create a sustainable system that ensures continuing quality and consistency.

When taken together, the syllabuses should form an overall curriculum that will:

- create a learning continuum from Prep to Year 12
- make available opportunities for balance across the learning undertaken in the final years of formal schooling.

The following questions are raised to stimulate and guide discussion. We invite you to respond to these questions and to raise others. Your responses will guide the QSA in developing a final proposal for a way forward.

The principles

Are the principles to guide the future development of syllabuses (coherence, rigour, flexibility and connection) the right ones? If not, what other principles should be included? Are there aspects of these principles that should be strengthened? Are there principles that should be removed?

The proposals

Do the proposals provide a way forward? If not, in what ways do they fall short? What aspects of the proposals should be changed? What other aspects should have been included in the proposals?

Consultation on this blueprint is open till 15 December 2006.

Email	Electronic responses should be sent by email to: syllabusreview@qsa.qld.edu.au
Fax	Faxes should be sent to (07) 3221 2553.
Mail	Written submissions should be sent to: The Review of Syllabuses Project, Queensland Studies Authority, PO Box 307 Spring Hill Qld 4004.
Website	For further details check the QSA website at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/
Telephone	If you have any questions about this review, please call Janice Chee on 07 3864 0457.

Appendix 1

Summary of Prep to 12 QSA Syllabuses

QSA syllabus documents grouped according to recommendations by the Prep to 12 Curriculum Committee (December 2004).

YEARS 1 to 10	YEARS 11 and 12			
	Authority	Extension	Authority-registered (SAS)	External
ENGLISH				
Yrs 1 to 10 English	English	English Extension (Literature)	English Communication Functional English Literacy (and Numeracy) (2000)	English
MATHEMATICS				
Yrs 1 to 10 Mathematics	Mathematics A Mathematics B Mathematics C		Pre-vocational Mathematics Functional Mathematics (draft) (Literacy and) Numeracy (2000)	Mathematics A Mathematics B
SCIENCE				
Yrs 1 to 10 Science	Biology Chemistry Physics Earth Science Multi-Strand Science Science21 (trial)			Biology Chemistry Physics
	Marine Studies		Marine & Aquatic Practices	
Levels 4–6 Agriculture Education	Agricultural Science		Agriculture & Horticulture	
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES				
Yrs 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment	Study of Society Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies Futures			

YEARS 1 to 10		YEARS 11 and 12		
	Authority	Extension	Authority-registered (SAS)	External
Yrs 9 to 10 History	Ancient History Modern History			Ancient History Modern History
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES (continued)				
Yrs 9 to 10 Geography	Geography			Geography
Yrs 9 to 10 Civics	Political Studies			
	Philosophy & Reason (formerly Logic)			Philosophy & Reason
	Study of Religion		Religion & Ethics	
ARTS				
Yrs 1 to 10 Arts	Visual Art		Creative Arts	Art
	Music	Music Extension (Performance)		
	Drama			Drama
	Dance			
	Film, Television and New Media			
BUSINESS AND COMMERCE				
Levels 4–6 Business Education	Business Communication & Technologies ²		Business	
	Economics			
	Business Organisation & Management			
			Retail	
	Accounting			Accounting
	Legal Studies			Legal Studies
	Tourism ³ (in development)		Tourism	
TECHNOLOGIES				
Levels 4–6 Information Communication & Technology Education	Information Technology Systems ⁴		Information Communication & Technology	
	Information Processing & Technology			
	Graphics			
Years 1 to 10 Technology	Technology Studies			
Levels 4–6 Industrial Technology Education	Engineering Technology		Industrial Skills	
	Manufacturing Practices and Studies (in development)		Manufacturing	
	Aerospace Studies (in development)			

YEARS 1 to 10	YEARS 11 and 12			
	Authority	Extension	Authority-registered (SAS)	External
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION				
Yrs 1 to 10	Health Education		Recreation	
Health & Physical Education	Physical Education			
Levels 4–6	Home Economics			
Home Economics Education			Social & Community Studies	
	Hospitality Studies ⁵		Hospitality	
LANGUAGES				
Yrs 1 to 10 French	French	French Extension		
Yrs 1 to 10 German	German	German Extension		
Yrs 1 to 10 Indonesian	Indonesian	Indonesian Extension		
Yrs 1 to 10 Chinese	Chinese			Chinese
Yrs 1 to 10 Italian	Italian			
Yrs 1 to 10 Japanese	Japanese			
Yrs 1 to 10 Korean	Korean			
	Latin Modern Greek Russian Spanish Vietnamese Polish			
EARLY YEARS				
Early Years Curriculum Guidelines and support materials			Early Childhood Practices	
Preschool Curriculum Guidelines				

.....
2 Includes BSB20101 Certificate II in Business

3 Will include THT20502 Certificate II in Tourism Operations)

4 Includes ICA30199 Certificate III in Information Technology (Software Applications) or ICA30299 Certificate III in Information Technology (General) or ICA30399 Certificate III in Information Technology (Network Administration).

5 Includes either THH1102 Certificate I in Hospitality (Operations) or THH11102 Certificate I in Hospitality

Appendix 2

Consultation and Research — a snapshot

Since July 2005, the QSA has undertaken extensive consultation and has commissioned research to inform the future development of syllabuses for the senior phase of learning.

Consultation

Consultation undertaken between October 2005 and February 2006 included:

meetings with key education and training stakeholders such as principals, unions, parents, universities, employers, training organisations

34 community forums at 15 regional and metropolitan centres

200 written submissions from schools, parents, employer groups as well as education and training peak bodies, agencies and sectors

internal meetings with QSA Governing Body, QSA sub-committees and Subject Advisory Committees, as well as officers from the office of the QSA.

Common themes that emerged from the consultation and written submissions are summarised under the consultation issues. The full consultation report is available at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/

Participants in the consultation generally agreed that the senior phase of learning should provide a rich environment for developing social maturity as well as preparing students for making life choices. It's a time when young people get ready to move onto work, training or university.

Valued knowledge and skills

- All syllabuses should include the knowledge, skills and dispositions that enable learners to continue their learning throughout their lives.
- Learners in the senior phase should have specific knowledge and understanding about civics and citizenship, money management, Indigenous culture and multiculturalism.
- All post-school pathways require students to develop the same sorts of general knowledge, skills and dispositions.
- All young people should keep their options for the future open.

Structure of QSA syllabuses and syllabus design

- Syllabuses should
 - make links to learners' past learning and future pathways
 - allow flexibility at the local level
 - reflect the real time available for learners to achieve and demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills
 - specify companion subjects and how subjects support each other
 - have a common structure and language
 - state clearly the core expectations of what is to be taught.

- Syllabuses should allow the development of courses of different lengths and allow learners to include depth and breadth of learning, gain a broad general education or have an opportunity to specialise
- The purpose of Authority and Authority-registered subjects needs to be clearer, especially what makes them different and how they articulate to different post-school pathways,
- The amount of assessment, especially in Term 3 of Year 12 is a concern.

Pathways and the suite of syllabuses

- The linkages between the phases of learning, Prep to 12, need to be strengthened.
- Issues about how learners build their study structures in the senior phases included:
 - all learners should have choices available that test their capabilities before committing themselves to a particular post-school pathway
 - all learners should have opportunities to undertake study structures that build a QCE and that attest to a coherent body of learning.
- Courses identified as missing from the suite of syllabuses included:
 - courses for disengaged learners and transition courses for learners who continue to struggle in basic areas of learning
 - courses for learners not aiming for university, for example a range of subjects with explicit links to careers/ industry or to study in VET.
- Specific areas of study identified as missing from the suite of syllabuses included:
 - an Authority English subject concentrating on technical English
 - an Authority subject in English as a Second Language
 - environmental science and sustainable futures
 - civics, citizenship and community engagement
 - money management and financial literacy
 - LOTE subjects at a higher level to challenge native speakers.

Year 10

- Year 10 is regarded as the beginning of the senior phase of learning and the link with Year 11 should be strengthened.
- Year 10 students should not begin Year 11 work, rather students should engage with learning and expectations that prepare them for Year 11.

Ongoing review

- The time required to introduce new subjects or areas of learning and review syllabuses should be reduced to a three-year review cycle.
- The QSA practice of including representatives from the education and training sectors, industry and the community should continue.
- All syllabus development committees should include people who teach learners in Years 11 and 12 and people who teach in courses immediately after Year 12.

Research

In addition to an investigation of national and international research, the QSA commissioned three independent research papers. These are available at www.qsa.qld.edu.au/

The commissioned research papers focused on:

- the current suite of syllabuses and learning important for post-school pathways, undertaken by Professor Rob Gilbert and Hilary Macleod
- approaches to syllabus design, undertaken by Professor Peter Freebody
- an external perspective on the Authority subjects, undertaken by Professor David Conley.

Each paper has different emphasises, however some common themes emerged.

Freebody and Conley discuss the importance of an underlying rationale to inform how decisions are made about the learning that is included, the sequencing and the emphasis. They observed that the syllabuses do not relate to or refer to each other in their statements of organisation or rationale and “as a suite, they represent a collection code” (Freebody p.13). As Conley says, “from a student’s perspective, each subject may seem like a self-contained unit with few connections with any other syllabus” (p.5).

The amount of choice in the syllabuses was identified as an issue in all three papers. Freebody discussed the impact of student choice on future opportunities. Gilbert and Macleod and Conley show that the highly optional nature of the syllabuses is problematic, as it is difficult to identify experiences which all learners can reasonably be expected to have in the course of study. Conley highlighted the “considerable leeway for teachers to develop their own emphases” in the assessment system and Gilbert and Macleod identified the amount of choice in learning experiences and units of study. The assumption is that “different choices will nonetheless achieve the same outcomes. However, this is clearly not the case” (Gilbert and Macleod p.32).

The need to be futures-focused was also a common theme. There needs to be a common thread in all syllabuses that emphasises the sorts of skills and dispositions that will set students up well for the future. While the syllabuses often refer to attributes, there is no formal integrated list nor mechanism to ensure they are developed across all syllabuses. Gilbert and Macleod conclude that the current syllabuses provide a mixed picture about the skills generally believed to encourage engagement with learning over a lifetime

The need to foster greater independence and ownership of learning, include assessment that required research, analysis and problem solving, and to include technology as an integral part of the learning was emphasised. There has to be a shift away from “know what” to “know how” and a requirement to demonstrate rather than “appreciate” or be “aware of” a disposition (Gilbert and Macleod p.33).

Freebody’s paper concentrates on the importance of disciplines and the “dual mandate of disciplinarity”, that is, a tighter link between the discipline and how it works in the world. He raised the issue that some school subjects do not have a discernable relationship to discipline/s. This is taken up in Conley’s paper when he says there should be a range of subjects that provide access to a wide variety of career pathways rather than a choice between academic preparation and vocational/job preparation. He states that all subjects should have intellectual challenge and worldly relevance and in this context questions the division between Authority and Authority-registered subjects.

Conley offers suggestions for syllabus design including more flexibility around the two-year courses, the possibility for interchangeable parts and the importance of keeping options open and avoiding streaming.

All papers include comments on the need for a student-centred orientation that focuses on the coherence and future relevance of learning. Conley suggests that syllabuses could be cross-referenced against career pathways.

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Glossary

Area of learning means a category in which different types of courses of study fit. Currently, there are four areas of learning that can contribute toward the Senior Statement and the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) — Authority subjects, Authority-registered subjects, vocational education and training (VET), and recognised courses and subjects.

ASCED classifies learning into the following areas: Natural and physical sciences; Information Technology; Engineering and related technologies; Architecture and building; Agriculture, environmental and related studies; Health; Education; Management and commerce; Society and culture; Creative Arts; Food, hospitality and personal services.

Authority subject is an area of learning

1. for which:
 - there is an approved syllabus or accredited syllabus, course or subject; and
 - the Authority has approved a work program under the Act; and
2. in which results are subject to the QSA's procedures for moderation.

Authority-registered subject is an area of learning:

- for which there is a subject area specification (SAS) and a study plan approved by the QSA or, the QSA has approved a work program under the Act; and
- in which results are not currently subject to the QSA's procedures for moderation.

Comparability in this paper refers to the extent to which judgments made about student achievement can be compared across different contexts.

Curriculum in this paper means a collection of subjects.

ETRF stands for Education and Training Reforms for the Future.

Field of learning is a curriculum organiser built by combining learning in related areas, both theoretical and applied, and ideally having a connection with a KLA.

Key Learning Area syllabuses (KLAs) comprise Queensland's common curriculum for the compulsory years of schooling (Years Prep to 10). Each KLA describes learning outcomes for each level of the eight nationally agreed 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.

Knowledge economy in this paper refers to the technological developments in the 20th century that have transformed the majority of wealth-creating work from physically-based to knowledge-based work. Technology and knowledge are now the key factors of production. With increased mobility of information and the global work force, knowledge and expertise can be transported instantaneously around the world. We are now an information society in a knowledge economy where knowledge management is essential.

Overall Position (OP) indicates a student's rank-order position based on overall achievement in Authority subjects. It is one piece of information recorded on the Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES).

QSA stands for Queensland Studies Authority.

Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) refers to the award attained by a young person who has achieved 20 credits in the required pattern and who has met the literacy and numeracy requirements. The learning achievements banked during the senior phase of learning contribute towards the qualification.

Senior phase of learning begins with young people registering with the QSA the year before they turn 16 and ends when the QSA awards them a QCE.

Study area specifications (SASs) are frameworks from which Authority-registered subjects are developed. Schools can use a SAS to develop courses of study based on three approaches:

- APPROACH A: Stand-alone delivery of VET certificate(s)
- APPROACH B: Vocational learning strands (no VET)
- APPROACH C: Strand allowing for a VET outcome.

Study pattern describes a sequence of learning that is required or recommended.

Syllabus is a document that supplies a curriculum framework for a course or subject either developed and approved, accredited, or recognised by the QSA. QSA syllabuses provide advice about the scope of learning or subject area and any mandatory components for learning, assessment, standards and quality assurance required for reporting or certification. Schools interpret a syllabus and develop work programs or study plans. The syllabus provides the basis for schools to decide on the curriculum they offer.

Vocational education and training (VET) refers to the nationally accredited training package qualifications.