

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Subject guide 2009

This subject guide relates to courses developed from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Senior Syllabus 2009

Why study Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies?

Reconciliation. Land rights. Mabo. *Terra nullius*. Coming of the Light. Sacred sites.

These are issues of our time. Understanding them will make for a better Australia.

The subject explores these issues and more. It is about the histories, cultures, values, beliefs, languages, lifestyles and roles of two distinct Indigenous cultures in Australia — Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people.

The subject explores the Indigenous knowledge systems and shows how these systems shape learning for all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. It enriches their own connectedness to knowledge and helps them understand that knowledge and knowing is integrated and holistic.

Students explore the following integrated themes to build a deeper understanding of an Indigenous way of viewing (“being in”) the world and a connectedness to the distinct cultures and identities:

Time, continuity and change	Places and spaces
Cultures and identities	Political and economic systems

The subject has value for all students because looking at important events from various points of view may offer new perspectives. Understanding that there are different ways of viewing the world will help equip students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to identify and avoid prejudice and racism.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is of value, not only to the school community, but also to local Indigenous communities. Community and cultural protocols are an important aspect of the subject. The subject helps the school, parents and students to:

- engage the school and the local Indigenous community in shared activities
- appreciate and understand the value of diversity
- move towards reconciliation at the local level
- build harmonious relations amongst groups within the school community
- encourage young people to be positive and active citizens in their local community
- provide real-life contexts because the subject draws its content from the local community.

What is studied?

The subject investigates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and experiences through relevant local Indigenous communities. It also challenges students to undertake a “learning journey” and to re-evaluate their own assumptions and positions about these issues.

The subject is based around the four integrated themes listed above. These are the key concepts or central ideas that direct students’ critical research and inquiry. Students study a number of inquiry topics — in-depth studies of the course themes.

Two of the inquiry topics have a local area focus. Local area study enables students to develop and demonstrate their understanding of the interconnectedness of Indigenous histories, societies and cultures and relate these to contemporary life for Indigenous Australians.

How do students learn?

A special aspect of this subject is the promotion of leadership skills. Students develop planning and organisational skills through working with people, gathering information and managing time. Students plan and carry out independent and group projects across a range of topics and tasks.

Students may:

- work as a member of a group to collect, organise and record data
- work with a local Indigenous community to undertake primary research
- make use of community resources through surveys, interviews, excursions and invitations to guest speakers
- analyse and evaluate the results of data collection and primary research
- access and use computer databases and internet resources
- participate in individual and group community projects
- take part in performance presentations such as audiovisual presentations, seminars, debates and practical demonstrations
- publish a pamphlet, a brochure, a local newspaper
- prepare a folio of items that demonstrate a special interest.

How are students assessed?

Assessment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies enables students to demonstrate achievement in the four dimensions of ‘knowing and understanding’, ‘managing and processing through critical inquiry’, ‘reflecting on perspectives and processes’ and ‘communicating’.

To determine a student’s level of achievement, schools may select from, and combine in a variety of ways, the following assessment techniques: objective and/or short-answer questions, responses to stimulus materials, learning logs, performance presentations, essay questions, research reports/assignments.

How can parents help?

Parents and carers can help students by providing a supportive environment in the home and showing an interest in what students are doing every day. The following suggestions will help

students develop and shape valuable perspectives and opinions on a wide range of social issues and situations:

- discussing among family members interesting current social issues, at both local and national levels
- promoting the educational as well as the entertainment value of television, radio and the print media by encouraging access to current events and materials that have a social or political focus
- providing access to radio programs, newspapers and journal articles, either in the home or through libraries and community and school information centres, to help students to consider a variety of options on social issues and situations
- accompanying their students to cultural events such as art shows and festivals.

More information

If you would like more information, please email senior.syllabuses@qcaa.qld.edu.au. You can also visit the QCAA website www.qcaa.qld.edu.au and search for 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies'.