

21st century skills for senior curriculum

A position paper

Purpose

Refining and expanding a broad set of skills and dispositions during senior schooling is essential to students' success in further education and in life. By preparing students 'for the future world of work' and equipping them with 'critical life skills' we are shaping them into future-ready individuals who excel as 'critical and creative thinkers' (Aus Gov, DoE 2022). These transferable skills, often referred to as 21st century skills, allow young people to become agile, adaptive learners equipped to navigate personal, academic, social and economic challenges (UNICEF 2019). These are the skills that will enable students 'to become active, responsible and engaged citizens' (OECD 2018).

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) has identified and defined a set of 21st century skills based on national and international research about the skills students need in the 21st century. Along with literacy and numeracy, these 21st century skills are the underpinning factors shaping the development of the senior syllabuses. These skills build on those that are embedded and developed through the Australian Curriculum general capabilities in Prep to Year 10 (QCAA 2022).

These 21st century skills will help prepare Queensland students by providing them with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to be equipped for the demands of higher education, work and life, and to participate effectively in the community and the economy in a complex and rapidly changing world.

Syllabus development must respond to the learning needs of all young people, and facilitate effective transitions to further education, training and employment. This is achieved by including the underpinning factors in syllabus development. The underpinning factors are derived from current education, industry and community expectations. They overlap, interact with and build on the general capabilities taught in the Years P–10 Australian Curriculum, and include literacy, numeracy and 21st century skills.

These 21st century skills include critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration and teamwork, personal and social skills, and digital literacy. These are supported by associated skills, which elaborate on the 21st century skills.

21st century skills

21st century skills and associated skills

21st century skill	Associated skills	21st century skill	Associated skills
critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analytical thinking • problem-solving • decision-making • reasoning • reflecting and evaluating • intellectual flexibility 	creative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovation • initiative and enterprise • curiosity and imagination • creativity • generating and applying new ideas • identifying alternatives • seeing or making new links
communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective oral and written communication • using language, symbols and texts • communicating ideas effectively with diverse audiences 	collaboration and teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relating to others • recognising and using diverse perspectives • participating and contributing • community connections
personal and social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adaptability/flexibility • management (self, career, time, planning and organising) • character (resilience, mindfulness, open- and fair-mindedness, self-awareness) • leadership • citizenship • cultural awareness • ethical (and moral) understanding 	digital literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operations and concepts • accessing and critically analysing information • being productive users of technology • digital citizenship (being safe, positive and responsible online)

How are the 21st century skills to be used?

Syllabuses

Each syllabus identifies the relevant 21st century skills that can be developed through teaching and learning strategies. When developing senior syllabuses, expert writing teams (EWTs) identified which 21st century skills were most relevant to each syllabus. The degree to which these skills are embedded is determined by the distinctive nature of the subject. Though coverage of each skill may vary from syllabus to syllabus, students are provided with a variety of opportunities to learn through and about the 21st century skills across the course of study.

The 21st century skills may be embedded in a number of sections within senior syllabuses including:

- rationale
- objectives

- subject matter
- pedagogical and conceptual frameworks
- assessment.

Planning

Teachers are encouraged to:

- model the 21st century skills
- make explicit the connections between the subject and the 21st century skills
- provide a variety of learning activities that support the development of the 21st century skills
- provide opportunities for students to practise 21st century skills as authentic elements of the subject
- provide feedback to students on the 21st century skills.

References

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