

# English literature review

Senior syllabus redevelopment

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# Executive summary

## Syllabuses comprising the English subject group

<b>Authority syllabuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English 2010</li><li>• English Extension 2011</li><li>• English for ESL Learners 2007 extended trial, amended 2009</li><li>• Literature (NEW SUBJECT)</li></ul>
<b>Authority-registered syllabuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English Communication 2004</li></ul>
<b>VET qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 10563NAT Certificate I in Work and Life Skills</li><li>• FSK10113 Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways</li><li>• FSK10213 Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways</li><li>• FSK20113 Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways</li></ul>

## Overview of methodology and findings

### Methodology

The review began with a survey of recent issues of nine key English education journals widely recognised as influential within the field, and reflective of current practice and debates about future directions in Australia and internationally.

Common areas of focus and concern were identified within this literature scan, including:

- definitions of ‘English’ in current times, and their implications
- the nature of literacy — which literacies?
- English for students from multiple linguistic backgrounds, and how this might best be conceived and organised
- text selection and related issues — canonicity, choice, genre, prescription, analytic frameworks etc.
- digital texts and technologies
- English as a vehicle for the discussion of themes, issues and social concerns
- assessment — policies, practices and effects.

This research formed a background against which subjects in the Queensland English subject group were examined.

A close reading of the Queensland syllabuses under review, and the construction of an overview of the teaching, learning and assessment focuses followed the literature scan.

The four syllabuses were mapped against each other for similarities and differences. Connections between these syllabuses and the Australian Curriculum, and Queensland F–10 curriculum were identified.

Then, after gathering documentation, a close reading of similar syllabuses from Western Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, New York State, the International Baccalaureate (IB), and England's A-levels was undertaken, and an overview of the teaching, learning and assessment focuses, the scope of learning, and how learning is organised and described within these syllabuses developed. In the course of this process, reflections on the relevance of these syllabuses from other jurisdictions for the Queensland syllabuses were noted.

Finally, the Queensland English senior syllabuses were reviewed against six areas identified by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) as 21st century skills reflecting current educational trends.

## Key findings

English is a broad 'cultural' subject, spanning theoretical understandings, dissection of social norms, practical communicative skills, and creative thought and action realised in many ways. All syllabus documents surveyed reflected these perspectives, but were configured differently according to contexts, purposes, cohorts, principles and priorities.

Contemporary definitions of the subject English are located within sociocultural paradigms that see relationships between multiple dimensions of the subject as interdependent and dynamic. Assessment of specific elements and focuses reflective of core course elements and dimensions occur within the broader context of a suite of activities and tasks. Queensland is consistent with other jurisdictions surveyed in observing these principles. Specific configurations and weightings between elements and their assessment varied across jurisdictions.

Organising principles embedded in the Queensland syllabuses used to develop courses of study — continuity; increasing complexity of challenge; range; increasing independence; and the inclusion of cultural, social and individual differences — provide a strong foundation for school-based course development.

All jurisdictions, including Queensland, map assessment closely to course content, and provide for a spread of tasks and assessment instruments that collectively reflect the content and dimensions of the syllabuses. No single individual item is seen as encompassing all learning undertaken in the course. All courses targeted towards university entrance, with the exception of Queensland Authority syllabuses (see the list of [Authority syllabuses](#) on p.1) and New York State, include at least one item that is externally assessed under examination conditions.

Striking an effective balance between centrally mandated elements and school-specific individual translations is difficult but crucial. A noticeable strength of the Authority and the Authority-

registered syllabuses in the English subject area is their lack of over-prescriptiveness, allowing schools to tailor courses to closely fit the interests and needs of students.

Explicit reference to creating and analysing digital texts across the Authority or Authority-registered syllabuses is limited. Queensland syllabuses acknowledge the increasing presence of multimodal and digital texts and technologies as contemporary communicative forms, but like most other jurisdictions, courses are limited in the degree to which digital texts and technologies are represented.

Queensland syllabuses under review had inconsistencies across their respective structures that may militate against closer alignment between courses, should that be sought. In particular, differences in structure, content and orientation are apparent between English for ESL Learners 2007 (amended 2009), hereafter 'English for ESL Learners') and English 2010. However, this only becomes an issue if there is the intention to provide for ESL to be taught within the context of 'mainstream' English, as is the case in Victoria.

## Summary of recommendations

Existing strengths in the Queensland syllabuses should be maintained as far as possible:

- balance between centralised direction and school autonomy in tailoring mandated requirements to meet the needs of a school's students
- recognition of the aesthetic and creative possibilities of the subject
- significant presence of oral and signed language in activities and assessment
- diversity of pedagogical and assessment activities
- connections between the subjects and the everyday and workplace worlds
- creative and productive elements of the syllabuses, and assessment outcomes.

Texts set for study should include a wider range of digital and other forms of multimodal texts than is currently apparent, and the requirement to do so should be written in to work program requirements. Similarly, opportunities to analyse, create and use digital texts and technologies should be expanded. Texts chosen for study across all courses should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure currency, relevance and freshness.

English Extension should continue to operate as a Queensland subject in its own right, in addition to the new Literature syllabus under development. Care should be taken to ensure overlap or duplication is avoided. Specific features of English Extension, such as the comparative use of different theoretical frameworks, and consideration of their effects, mark the subject as distinct.

Consideration should be given to the closer alignment of the English for ESL Learners syllabus with the English syllabus, provided core principles and approaches in teaching English to speakers of other languages are not compromised.

The specialist principles and approaches that characterise teaching English to students from a non-English-speaking background need to be respected, should redevelopments include aligning the ESL syllabus more closely with the Queensland English syllabus.

# 1 Subject group: Significant emerging trends

## 1.1 Assessment

Contemporary definitions of the subject English are located within sociocultural paradigms that see relationships between multiple dimensions of the subject as interdependent and dynamic. Assessment of specific elements and focuses reflective of core course elements and dimensions occur within the broader context of a suite of tasks and activities.

English is understood as comprising multiple social 'languages' that are context dependent. An example of this can be found in the increasing prevalence of digital technologies as contexts in which types of knowledge are shared and constructed. This understanding of English is sometimes in tension with the kinds of fine-grained skills centralised testing often seeks to focus on.

Where external examinations are employed, all jurisdictions and syllabus documents reviewed maintain a significant component of school-based assessment. In most instances, with the exception of England's A-levels, the balance is 50%. External examinations are undertaken only at Year 12 level with the exception of England's A-levels, which are two-year courses [in Years 12 and 13], so that year-level equivalence with Australia is less precise.

All jurisdictions map assessment closely to course content, and provide for a spread of tasks and assessment instruments that collectively reflect the content and dimensions of the course. No single individual item is seen as encompassing all learning undertaken in the course.

In most jurisdictions, where school assessments are counted for external, summative purposes, these assessments are based only on Year 12 work, with all Year 11 work internally assessed and not counting towards the final exit result.

Most jurisdictions provide opportunities for creating multimodal forms for assessment, and/or the assessment of multimodal texts, as part of school-based work. However, with the possible exception of New York State, this does not comprise a large proportion of assessment overall, in comparison with more traditional textual forms.

Multimodal tasks and instruments (e.g. the creation of videos, audiotapes, slide presentations and the analysis of multimodal texts) may or may not include digital texts and the use of digital technologies.

Where the analysis or evaluation of literary texts under exam conditions is prescribed, it is more common for this to be undertaken on known rather than unknown texts.

Most syllabus documents include assessment instruments and focuses that take the form of oral spoken or signed dimensions.



Creating texts is a significant element in most syllabus documents, but for the most part is undertaken and assessed at school level rather than in external examinations.

Courses in 'Foundation' English (or related terms) usually assess all work at school level, with achievement in these subjects not contributing to final marks or tertiary entrance eligibility.

Note: A number of high-profile US universities are currently moving towards a multiple-year digital portfolio of work samples as a university entrance requirement. The subject area of English would seem a particularly relevant area for this kind of requirement. This shift suggests that the ways in which digital technologies will eventually shape university entrance procedures may not be through external examination processes that are technologically mediated. Instead, digital portfolios may become the preferred means of evidencing student ability.

## 1.2 Pedagogical approaches

Syllabus documents tend to identify course structures, objectives, areas of learning and assessment activities, rather than recommending specific pedagogical approaches and activities. These are generally outlined in supporting documents available elsewhere (and not in the syllabus itself). Tasks and activities specified within syllabuses may *imply* pedagogical approaches. Observations below are based on implied approaches in the syllabuses surveyed, particularly with respect to assessment tasks and requirements, and on trends apparent in the literature.

Student-centred pedagogical approaches and activities form an important part of most syllabuses, within the broader context of prescribed assessment outcomes and focuses. Examples include group work and assignments, group discussions, student research projects, workplace-based projects, student selection of texts for critical analysis, student development of assessment criteria, consultation and formal group presentations.

While assessment instruments tend to favour written modes, in most syllabuses substantial and explicit time and attention is provided for oral and spoken/signed classroom activities and assessment tasks. Oral tasks also include performance options and presentations of many kinds.

The creation of imaginative and creative texts in diverse modes continues into senior levels, and is an important component of most syllabuses, sitting alongside argument and analysis. Most syllabuses offer opportunities for students to use a variety of modes and media to interpret and produce texts. However, the production of 'creative' or imaginative tends to be defined or overshadowed by activities requiring the formal study and analysis of texts, and the production of work in essay format for exams.

All syllabuses include the requirement to attend to forms of literacy that extend beyond 'traditional' and print-based forms. However, the diversity and extent of multimodal forms of

literacy (e.g. multiliteracies, digital literacies) and corresponding classroom activities and focuses varies.

Pedagogical approaches that acknowledge and build upon the digital skills and literacies students bring into the classroom are present but, currently, limited in most senior secondary English syllabuses. Pedagogical approaches include the use of digital technologies to create multimodal texts, to create presentations, and to analyse texts and issues under study. The New York State English syllabus document provides an excellent example, linking multimedia journals and argument.

Numerous courses offer opportunities for the production of videos and other forms of multimodal imaginative/creative presentations, which may stand alone or be linked to texts under study. In most instances the use of multimodal/digital technologies (rather than 'old' media, e.g. photography, video) to create texts is optional rather than prescribed.

Attention to the ways in which attitudes and values are formed, shaped, represented and understood is universal across the courses surveyed. Discussion of attitudes and values, usually linked to specific persuasive, informative or literary texts is an important component of all courses. This is linked to the central role and purpose of the subject in society, and consistent with the goal of empowering students 'as purposeful, creative and critical language users who understand how texts can convey and transform personal and cultural perspectives' (Queensland *English Senior Syllabus 2010*, p.1).

Attention to language is an explicit and central component of all courses, for the most part taught and learnt in context. Pedagogical approaches are not prescribed; however, English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) syllabus documents, Foundation, and related syllabus documents (e.g. English Communication) tend to follow pedagogical approaches based on EAL/D or Adult and Workplace learning paradigms.

Texts lie at the heart of most courses, with text selection considerably shaping the nature and emphasis of the course. Text selection in English subjects, in some ways, serves as a device for measuring whether, and in what ways, pedagogies are serving students and in keeping with 21st century needs and interests. Text choice is a powerful indicator of values, ideologies and change within the English classroom. Issues raised in discussion of text selection range across notions of quality, diversity, medium and genre, and significance. The syllabus documents surveyed for this review variously reflect the diversity and consequences of text choices for pedagogy and curriculum.

## 1.3 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses

The introduction of an external assessment component to Queensland English syllabuses is consistent with international trends and practice. Care should be taken that this does not negatively affect established course work and student-centred practices, tasks and priorities (as reflected in school-based assessment) and that existing practices, balance and priorities are maintained.

The trend towards increasing awareness of, and attention to, digital media texts and technologies has implications for broadening opportunities to build on student knowledge in this area; to (further) develop capacities to operate, analyse and critique digital texts and media; and to produce digital texts of multiple kinds. This trend opens up new and familiar textual forms and creative opportunities for inclusion in the English syllabuses, consistent with the digital economy. It has the capacity to increase perceived relevance and student engagement, and to provide for the development and exercise of '21st century skills'. It also has implications for issues of equity, access and provision; authenticity and verification; and the replication of existing patterns of privilege and exclusion. Care should be taken to explicitly counter this.

The survey confirms there is consistency across Australian, international syllabus documents and Queensland syllabuses in English Communication in relation to core areas. In relation to Queensland's English, priorities set out in the subject area 'Rationales', for English in general and English 2010 in particular, are consistent with national and international practice and should be maintained.

The reading and analysis of texts, and the creation of argumentative, analytic and creative responses to texts, continues to occupy a central role in most courses. In the case of foundation and workplace-oriented courses, texts play a less central role, with texts identified for analysis or production tending towards 'information' and 'everyday' texts rather than more literary genres.

All jurisdictions are concerned to provide for inclusivity and diversity, but the language in which this is described, and the course content that follows, varies across jurisdictions, with potential implications for how students see themselves and are regarded by others.

The importance of developing communicative competence in English is an important dimension of offerings in all jurisdictions, with oral proficiency and communication highlighted in Foundational, EAL/D and English courses particularly.

## 1.4 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

In keeping with the rest of the westernised world, Australia is an increasingly changing cultural landscape, and conversations about the implications of this for classrooms were prevalent. Provision should be made for pedagogical approaches that acknowledge and value the 'funds of knowledge' that all students bring into the classroom as holders of cultural resources, to ensure English classrooms at this level operate as useful spaces of transformation for successful cultural futures.

### Recommendation 2

Rationales and overviews for all Queensland syllabuses should reflect sociocultural understanding of English as comprising multiple social languages, to offer students rich possibilities for critical, creative and analytical thinking.

### Recommendation 3

School-based assessment should continue to hold an important place in any revised Queensland syllabus, and remain rigorous, well substantiated and wide ranging.

### Recommendation 4

Assessments should involve demonstrating knowledge across a range of different contextual environments. Existing dimensions for exit standards should be maintained.

### Recommendation 5

Care should be taken to ensure external examinations do not overly shape or channel school-based activities and course priorities.

### Recommendation 6

Assessments in all of the subject group syllabuses need to include specific examples of work realised in digital mediums.

### Recommendation 7

Language in the syllabuses should reflect a consistent recognition of, and valuing of, the diverse cultural backgrounds and gender identities of the student cohort.

### Recommendation 8

Redevelopments of syllabuses should ensure that discussions of educational equity are not quarantined into introductory sections, but rather, that such discussion and related tasks and activities also permeate the syllabus more broadly.

### **Recommendation 9**

There should be clear, universal statements across all of the subject area syllabuses calling for careful selection and frequent redevelopments of texts.

### **Recommendation 10**

There should be an increased presence of digital texts, technologies and activities included in all areas.

### **Recommendation 11**

The range of text types included among multimodal digital texts should be extended. The International Baccalaureate (IB) specification of forms of 'new textualities' (e.g. graphic novels, hypertext narratives and fan fiction narratives) provides a useful exemplar.

## 2 Subjects in the group: Overview, comparison and connections

### 2.1 Queensland syllabuses and VET qualifications

English 2010 and English Extension 2011 work in complementarity, with students taking English Extension only at the Year 12 level. The aims, focuses and dimensions of English are further developed in English Extension, through Exit standards dimensions: *Understanding and interpreting, Applying/analysing* and *Evaluating/synthesising*. These dimensions function as a logical extension of those specified for English 2010. Both subjects include the analysis of language; the creation of texts; the development of critical perspectives and concepts of the aesthetic; and the identification, analysis and discussion of views and values and other aspects. Differences include the greater level of attention to theoretical framings of readings and representations in English Extension, and the inclusion of more 'literary' texts as objects of study. The two courses are well aligned and so the Extension syllabus achieves its aim.

English for ESL Learners is set out in a different way from the other Authority syllabuses. Differing in structure, orientation, purposes and assessment, this syllabus reflects the formal focus of language acquisition. Differences include the explicit teaching of 'knowledge and skills required for English language learners to become competent users of written and spoken English', reflective of ESL teaching/learning principles and the five points identified in the course rationale. These include the explicit teaching of the 'structural and grammatical requirements for the academic English required in Tertiary studies' and 'access to cultural thought processes in Western language and literature'. The model of grammar adopted in English for ESL Learners more closely reflects the 'traditional' Latinate grammar paradigm than those in English or English Extension. Attitudes and values are named as separate objectives linked to the acquisition of knowledge of language and [Australian] culture. English is conceptualised as a 'global language', with associated values and perspectives linked to international contexts, industry and globalisation.

Similarities between English for ESL Learners and English include a focus on English taught in context (sociocultural context — genre, purpose, audience, subject matter, language features); the study of spoken and written texts; the capacity to analyse, evaluate and produce texts; and to interact with and respond to others. Both courses teach with and about Standard Australian English 'and how to use it appropriately, effectively and accurately for a variety of purposes' (English for ESL Learners, p.4).

The second section of English for ESL Learners is organised around 'Global aims'. This is structurally more in keeping with the Authority-registered syllabus English Communication 2004 than the other Authority syllabuses.

Both English for ESL Learners and the Authority-registered syllabus English Communication include 'affective objectives'. Neither of the other Authority syllabuses under review includes objectives of this kind.

There are many similarities in the objectives and the teaching and learning aims of English 2010, English for ESL Learners and English Communication 2004. As these syllabuses are aimed at different audiences, likely centre on different texts, and require different exit standards, these courses should be viewed as compatible rather than overlapping. Students studying English for ESL Learners are not able to take English and English Extension — other senior syllabuses for Authority subjects.

## 2.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 12

There is the potential for significant overlap between English Extension 2011 and the new subject Literature when it is offered, as English Extension appears closer to this strand than to a Linguistics/Language strand. However, distinctions between English Extension and Australian Curriculum Literature, as currently available, and Literature offerings in other jurisdictions, suggest there is not a direct parallel between the two. English Extension should be maintained as a separate subject in its own right, in addition to Literature.

### Recommendation 13

Spoken language should occupy a larger and more explicit space in English for ESL Learners with specific inclusions in Objective 3.4: Communication skills.

### Recommendation 14

'Attitudes and values' should be removed as a separate objective of the English for ESL Learners syllabus and these focuses distributed across the course in a more integrated fashion, comparable with English 2010, English Extension 2011 and English Communication 2004.

## 2.3 Comparable syllabuses from selected Australian and international jurisdictions

All six jurisdictions offer similar syllabuses to English 2010 but these differ in their explicit references to new technologies as areas for investigation. For example, New South Wales Year 11 (Preliminary) and HSC English call for identifying, describing and analysing the ways different technologies and media for production affect the language and structure of particular texts. Similar focuses were explicit in the syllabuses from Western Australia and the New York State English Language Arts course.

Three jurisdictions offer syllabuses that serve as an extension to the mainstream senior secondary English syllabus, although one of these is a short course designed to be run for 24 days (a quarter of a year) only. To varying degrees, an emphasis on increasingly autonomous, student-directed study is a common aim across all courses.

Four jurisdictions offer syllabuses in keeping with English for ESL Learners. Two Australian jurisdictions have adopted the nomenclature English as an Additional Language (EAL), or English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) for this group of students, in keeping with the Australian Curriculum. In Victoria, the EAL course is designed to be taught concurrently with mainstream English to accommodate schools with small numbers of eligible students, or limited availability of EAL specialist teachers.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) requires all students to take a language additional to their first language, at either High or Standard levels. Within course content there is considerable emphasis on spoken language in teaching, learning and assessment, with *Global issues* a core theme within the syllabus.

Four jurisdictions offer Literature courses. These are all two-year courses and have broadly similar focuses on interpretation, analysis, and contextual study, connections across genres and forms, and responding to texts in both critical and creative ways.

Three jurisdictions offer syllabuses with similarities to English Communication 2004. All of these syllabuses differ from English Communication in that they are designed as one-year programmes.

## 2.4 Recommendations

### Recommendation 15

A greater degree of explicit reference to, and opportunities for, explorations of forms and genres of text connected with new technologies should be present in teaching, learning and assessment focuses of English 2010.

### Recommendation 16

English for ESL Learners should be retained as a separate course, but consideration should be given to expanding or reconceptualising the course as English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), as is the case elsewhere.

### Recommendation 17

Consideration should be given to options for English for ESL Learners or English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) to be taught concurrently with English 2010, for reasons of consistency and school organisation, if practical.



## Recommendation 18

English for ESL Learners should adopt a more 'global stance' and promote the value of intercultural understanding and multilingualism broadly realised, alongside the narrower and more specific emphasis on understanding Australian culture.

## 2.5 Connections with the Australian Curriculum

Pathways from the Foundation (Prep) Year to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: English into the Queensland syllabuses exist for each of the syllabuses in this review.

For all Queensland syllabuses except English Extension 2011, the Australian Curriculum (AC) offers comparable syllabuses.

Syllabus type	Syllabus	Path	AC subject
<b>Authority syllabuses</b>	• English 2010	Yes	Yes
	• English Extension 2011	Yes	No
	• English for ESL Learners 2007 (extended trial, amended 2009)	Yes	Yes
	• Literature (NEW SUBJECT)	Yes	Yes
<b>Authority-registered syllabuses</b>	• English Communication 2004	Yes	Yes

## 2.6 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses

### Comparable Queensland syllabuses and Australian Curriculum subjects

Syllabus type	Syllabus	AC subject
<b>Authority syllabuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English 2010</li><li>• English Extension 2011</li><li>• English for ESL Learners 2007 (extended trial, amended 2009)</li><li>• Literature (NEW SUBJECT)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English</li><li>• N/A</li><li>• English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D)</li><li>• Literature</li></ul>
<b>Authority-registered syllabuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English Communication 2004</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence</li><li>• Essential English (some connection)</li></ul>

Content descriptions for the Australian Curriculum English are grouped under an organising framework that presents five key aspects of learning, underpinning each of the four units that make up Senior English. The aspects — Texts in contexts, Language and textual analysis, Engaging and responding, Creating texts and Reflecting — between them encompass core elements of English curriculum, with these aspects configured differently according to context, consistent with international best practice. Texts in contexts and Language and textual analysis provide for the close study of a wide range of texts and language in socially situated, ‘real life’ contexts, whether in print or digital/multimodal form. Engaging and responding, Creating texts, and Reflecting underline the active and interactive dimensions of English, and the development of high level creative, analytic and reflective language use.

The content of the Queensland syllabus English 2010 and senior secondary Australian Curriculum English share many similarities. However, it appears that Dimension 2 in English 2010 ‘Understanding and controlling textual features’ — which is broken down into points about grammar, cohesive writing, vocabulary choice and mode-appropriate features — supports a relatively narrow range of the higher-order thinking required to meet the initial statement of the Australian Curriculum English ‘Rationale’: ‘developing students’ analytical, creative and critical thinking and communication skills in all language modes’.

A major difference between the Queensland syllabus English for ESL Learners and the Australian Curriculum EAL/D subject is the provision of units for students aiming to transition into tertiary study, as well as bridging units to build a foundation for work, training or further study. These units may be taken in a linear or concurrent process, as 2, 4, 6 or 8-unit courses.

There is no direct link or parallel between the Queensland syllabus for English Extension 2011 — an Authority subject — and the senior subject Literature in the Australian Curriculum. As noted earlier (see [2.1: Queensland syllabuses and VET qualifications](#)) distinctions between English Extension and Australian Curriculum Literature, as currently available, and Literature offerings in other jurisdictions, suggest there is not a direct parallel between the two, and that both could exist concurrently.

The Australian Curriculum particularly acknowledges the contribution of Asian Australians to Australian society and heritage, and specifies that content should include examples of Asian cultures in literature and other media. This is not specifically addressed in any of the Queensland syllabuses.

## 2.7 Recommendations

### Recommendation 19

A close reading of the 'Dimensions' in the Queensland syllabus English 2010 alongside the 'Rationale/Aims' and the five aspects of the Australian Curriculum senior secondary English 'organising framework' for content should be undertaken. This may result in a readjustment of the Queensland English 'Dimensions' to more closely match the Australian Curriculum mapping.

### Recommendation 20

Consideration should be given to the development of one or two half-year Bridging English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) syllabuses. These could be loosely constructed to allow maximum support for students' differing needs, providing for ease of transition or improved performance in other EAL/D syllabuses.

### Recommendation 21

In some jurisdictions (e.g. Victoria) it is possible for students to take more than one senior English course at Year 12 level, should they wish to do so. This provision is already in place in Queensland for English Extension 2011. With the expansion of Queensland offerings to include Literature in addition to existing Authority courses, decisions may be required about whether to limit the number of English subjects an individual student can take. While there are arguments to do so, including the need for students to undertake a balanced portfolio of subjects across the curriculum, students with particular strengths or interests in English subjects who wish to take more than one English should have the opportunity to do so.

## 3 Learning expectations

### 3.1 Scope of learning across Australian and international jurisdictions

Mainstream English courses offered in Australian jurisdictions and in New York State have a wide breadth of focus and are all broadly based, whereas England's A-level Language and Literature course and the International Baccalaureate both focus on depth of learning within a narrower range of content offerings within courses.

Courses with a narrower focus tend to be organised around the intensive study of a smaller number of texts. (In Ofqual's 2011 review of A-level English courses it was suggested that including assessment instruments that call for knowledge of whole texts, rather than focusing on extracts of texts, supports students to demonstrate the depth of their knowledge.)

Differences in the organisation of learning within the Literature courses were notable within the prescriptiveness of text selection, and requirements to read complete texts. Literature courses mostly focus on deep learning described through broad outcome statements.

Differences were also noted across the English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) syllabus documents with two jurisdictions setting out broad requirements and two structured with a deeper focus.

Learning is organised into core and elective content for courses taken at different levels (e.g. New South Wales), and/or with a mix of school-based and centrally examined components, with varying degrees of flexibility and autonomy in determining school-based texts, activities and work. In Victoria and Western Australia, all four units (Years 11–12) are mandated; New York State has eight core modules; England has two examined components and one school component; and the International Baccalaureate has four core units with some freedom of choice within them.

Australian syllabus documents describe learning in terms of broad outcome statements, which are then broken down or defined in ways that link to conceptual and specific content statements (New South Wales), key skills and knowledges (Victoria), and fine-grained content statements (Western Australia). International documents describe learning through broad outcome statements (England), lists of fine-grained content (New York State), and lists of conceptual statements and skills in development (IB).

## 3.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 22

The current balance in the Queensland syllabuses between central prescription of dimensions, on the one hand, and school autonomy about the implementation of these on the other, as far as possible should be retained.

### Recommendation 23

Syllabus redevelopments might consider reducing the number of texts studied, and aim to build deeper understandings of a smaller selection of texts. Victoria, New South Wales, England's A-Level, and the IB qualifications all specified a smaller number of texts than the Queensland syllabus English 2010. This suggestion should not be confused with a prioritising of traditional canonical text selections.

### Recommendation 24

Literature (NEW) should focus on depth of learning described through broad outcome statements.

## 4 Future focus: 21st century skills

QCAA has conducted initial research to determine a set of 21st century skills that reflect current educational trends.

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

## 4.1 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses

Many of these 21st century skills were already in evidence in existing syllabuses. And many of these skills are developed and modelled through high-quality, innovative and reflective classroom practices and pedagogies, and inclusive and equitable classroom environments. Generally, English subject syllabuses that focus on developing higher-order thinking through challenging conceptual learning experiences and broad outcome understandings, rather than presenting prescriptive lists of 'literacy skills', support growth in all of these six areas.

One area that consistently appeared as suitable for more attention across the syllabuses was ICT skills. The subject English in all its forms — such as a communicative medium, a creative medium, and as a research and analysis area — is increasingly expressed through digital technologies. This might be represented in the syllabuses through more inclusion of digital texts into course content, and more use of activities that utilise digital technologies, spaces, conventions and genres.

In English 2010, it appeared that there was scope for further development of 'Creative thinking', through a greater emphasis on aesthetic considerations as a component of the course, and more emphasis on creative or imaginative writing and responses. These elements would also play a useful part in the new Literature subject.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 25

All skills, where they were suitable, were embedded in the existing syllabuses to varying degrees of depth. Dimensions and activities within the existing syllabuses that support 21st century skills should be maintained and strengthened.

### Recommendation 26

All subjects in the group should consider mandating or strongly recommending the use of two or more examples of digital texts, and make provision for multiple assessment instruments that demonstrate proficient use of digital media.

### Recommendation 27: English

Maintain and strengthen existing strengths in course content and assessment activities that foster 'Critical thinking' and 'Collaboration and teamwork'. Additional opportunities for imaginative responses and creative thinking as assessment tasks should be redeveloped in the English syllabus. Additional, optional opportunities for composing and interpreting digital texts should be introduced. With respect to personal and social skills, to encourage teachers to consider these

aspects in assessment, the point 'consider the language needs of the students', which is reiterated in each of the tables in 'Section 5.5: Assessment techniques' in the syllabus, might be extended to include: 'and allow for a range of cultural representations and responses'.

### **Recommendation 28: English Extension**

Maintain and strengthen existing identified strengths in syllabus content and assessment activities that foster 'Critical thinking', 'Creative thinking', 'Communication', 'Collaboration and teamwork' and 'Personal and social skills', and 'ICT skills'.

### **Recommendation 29: English for ESL Learners**

Increase the emphasis on 'Creative thinking' skills in assessment instruments and in 'Cognitive processes' within Section 6.8.1: Standards associated with exit criteria. Include a greater number of spoken/signed assessment instruments in which 'Communication' skills can be demonstrated. Also include multimodal compositions that combine written and spoken elements as assessment instruments that recognise and foster the development of 'ICT skills'.

### **Recommendation 30: Literature**

The list of 21st century skills should be embedded throughout the syllabus. Elective content that emphasises 'Creative thinking' skills to provide opportunities for imaginative composition could provide pathways for students who wish to pursue future creative endeavours. Self-awareness, awareness of others' cultural backgrounds, and ethical and moral understanding are key skills for Literature. A focus on 'Personal and social skills' will enable individual teachers to guide students' growth in this area through exploration of a wide-ranging and well-considered text selection and pedagogical approach. Many opportunities for developing productive 'ICT skills' might be explicitly incorporated into the prescriptions for core and elective aspects of this syllabus. Including wide-ranging text selections, including digital forms and genres, is one way this might occur, as is a requirement to create responses in a wide range of digital genres. Including some multimodal assessment instruments would allow these skills to be demonstrated.

### **Recommendation 31: English Communication**

Maintain and strengthen existing strengths in course content and assessment activities that foster 'Critical thinking', 'Creative thinking', 'Collaboration and teamwork' and 'Personal and social skills'. To build and strengthen 'ICT skills', provide increased opportunity about expectations for reading and composing a wide range of digital texts and genres in course objectives and in the generic unit outline exemplars offered; also include greater emphasis on 'ICT skills' in the exit criteria.



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