Non-State Schools Accreditation Board

Guideline for educational programs for non-state schools from 2025

May 2025

DELIVERING FOR QUEENSLAND

Queensland Government

Purpose

This guideline defines the requirements for a school's written educational program under section 9 of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (the Regulation).

Requirements for non-state schools

Part 2 Division 4 of the Regulation prescribes the requirements for educational programs for non-state schools in Queensland. Non-state schools are accredited to provide different types of education: primary, secondary and/or special education.

Statement of philosophy and aims

Under section 10 of the Regulation, a school must have a written statement of philosophy and aims, adopted by its governing body, that is used as:

a. the basis for the school's educational program
b. a guide for the school's educational and organisational practices.

The statement must be consistent with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Educational program

Sub-section 9(1) of the Regulation broadly defines the essential requirements for a school's written educational program. To meet these requirements, schools should be guided by the following principles when developing their educational program:

- **Access to curriculum:** The knowledge, understanding and skills essential for students to succeed in and beyond their schooling come from a range of learning areas.
- **Inclusive learning:** Educational programs must be inclusive and provide equitable access to enable the engagement and learning of every student.
- **Individual learning:** Learning occurs at different rates and in different ways. School communities and teachers understand the developmental diversity of the students they teach and develop programs that meet the educational needs of students.
- **Flexible delivery:** Schools structure and deliver educational programs in flexible ways that account for students' needs and interests and the school and community context.
- **Learning progress:** Assessment is an integral component of curriculum delivery. Achievement standards are developmental and define the knowledge, understanding and skills expected at each phase of learning. Student progress is monitored against achievement standards to ensure that every student can progress in their learning.

Curriculum provision requirements

The guideline sets out the requirements for curriculum provision, including teaching, assessment and reporting.

Prep–Year 10

The Australian Curriculum is a 3-dimensional written curriculum consisting of 8 learning areas, 7 general capabilities and 3 cross-curriculum priorities. The learning areas identify the essential knowledge, understanding and skills that students should have opportunities to learn.

Non-state schools are required to teach, assess and report on the Australian Curriculum learning areas for Prep to Year 10 or an alternative curriculum framework which has been recognised by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

Phases of development

The requirements for the scope and implementation of the Australian Curriculum for Prep to Year 10 is structured using the following **phases of development:**

- Prep to Year 2 (Foundation phase)
- Years 3 to 6 (Breadth phase — primary)
- Years 7 and 8 (Breadth phase — lower secondary)
- Years 9 and 10 (Pathways and programs phase)

Curriculum scope and implementation graphs are provided for each of the above phases of learning. They outline the **appropriate range of learning areas** for each phase and the requirements to teach, assess and report on learning.

Minimum requirements

The minimum requirements for providing the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 in Prep to Year 10 are expressed in terms of:

- requirements to *teach*, assess and report on, where
  - teach refers to the expectation that all students have access to teaching and learning in learning areas or subjects, aligned to the achievement standard
  - assess refers to the design and administration of summative assessment, including reasonable adjustments as appropriate, to gather evidence of student learning against the achievement standard. In Queensland, the achievement standard represents the C standard
  - report on refers to the provision of plain language reports to parents on student achievement and progress using a 5-point scale[1]
- notional teaching time, where
  - notional percentages provide a guide for coverage of the achievement standard
  - percentages reflect 1,000 hours per year or 500 hours per semester, based on 25 hours per week. Where a graph represents two years (e.g. Years 1 and 2), the percentages shown are based on 2,000 hours
  - schools make decisions about the time required to cover the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to learn. Learning may occur at different rates and in different ways
  - when delivering less than the notional percentages, schools consider the implications for coverage of the achievement standard. Decisions about delivering less than the notional percentages should be made in consultation with the school's governing body.

[1] This requirement is set out in section 59 of the Australian Education Regulation 2023.

Discretionary time

Discretionary time provides flexibility for schools to offer other courses, programs, studies or subjects. The programs are decided by schools, in consultation with the school's governing body, and are in addition to the Australian Curriculum requirements for each **phase of development**.

Implementation considerations: Australian Curriculum

Flexibility

Schools decide how best to deliver the curriculum and determine pedagogical and other delivery considerations that account for students' needs, interests and the school and community context.[2] There is no requirement for schools to structure their teaching and learning programs and timetables according to learning areas or subjects, or by using the Australian Curriculum learning area or subject names. This supports schools to structure their teaching and learning programs in innovative and engaging ways.

In making decisions about how to structure and deliver the curriculum in Prep–Year 10, schools ensure:

- students learn the knowledge, understanding and skills defined by the Australian Curriculum learning area or subject
- the achievement standard provides the reference point for assessing and reporting students' learning from Prep–Year 10.

Connected curriculum

Connected curriculum refers to the integration of knowledge, understanding and skills from more than one subject and/or learning area. Connecting the concepts from one or more learning areas supports students to see the relevance of what they are learning in real-world contexts which may enhance student engagement and understanding.

Schools make contextual decisions about what learning areas to connect, considering what additional learning students gain by connecting the learning areas.

Effective connected curriculum requires careful planning and relies on teacher expertise in the relevant learning areas. Connected curriculum units must maintain the integrity of each learning area. Schools need to determine how students demonstrate what they know and can do and how evidence will be collected for the relevant aspects of each learning area's achievement standard. Connected curriculum units may require less time than learning areas or subjects offered separately in the educational program.

School programs

Schools may offer Australian Curriculum content within other school-designed programs. For example, some of the Health subject's focus areas may be delivered as part of a school's pastoral program. Languages or Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) subjects may be delivered as part of cultural immersion experiences that sit outside of the regular timetable. Where Australian Curriculum content is delivered as part of school-designed programs, schools must be able to demonstrate alignment to the achievement standard.

Staffing and resourcing

Where schools have difficulty delivering specialist Australian Curriculum learning areas/subjects due to staffing or resourcing limitations (i.e. Languages, Technologies, The Arts), they should consider staffing and resourcing options to identify alternatives for implementing these learning areas/subjects. Alternative options may not cover all the knowledge, understanding and skills defined by the Australian Curriculum. Schools must consult with their communities and governing bodies before making decisions about alternative options to teach, assess and/or report on specialist learning areas/subjects.

[2] Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2020, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 5.0.*

Alternative schooling options

Some schools in Queensland provide alternative schooling options to meet the needs of different groups of young people. These include:

- special assistance schools accredited to provide a fee-free specialised education program
- trade or industry schools that provide a unique 2 to 3-year program that combines access to the curriculum combined with industry experience
- specialist schools that provide educational programs exclusively for students with disability.

Alternative education providers cater for a diverse range of students. Students have a wide range of physical, cognitive, sensory and social–emotional abilities, as well as a range of interests and abilities. They may face complexities accessing the Australian Curriculum achievement standards for the enrolled year level. An important part of providing an engaging educational experience is flexibility.

While every school has the responsibility to provide the Australian Curriculum (or an alternative curriculum recognised by ACARA) up to Year 10, schools that provide alternative schooling options need the flexibility to adapt the educational program to cater for the capabilities, interests and experiences of students. Flexibility is incorporated into the scope and implementation graphs to enable schools to engage and support their students. In addition, schools that provide alternative school options may modify learning programs for students with disability, as outlined in the following section.

Student diversity

The curriculum should enable the learning of every student. The written educational program for non-state schools must have regard to the ages, abilities, aptitudes and development of the school's students, and be responsive to the educational needs of students.[3]

Teachers understand the diversity of the students they teach and are responsible for providing equitable access to the curriculum. Teachers take account of students' abilities, interests and experiences to make adjustments to support them to engage with the curriculum and communicate their learning in different ways.[4] Where there is evidence that a student is unable to meet the achievement standards, schools make decisions to make curriculum adjustments to provide individual learning programs. Curriculum adjustments can be defined as modifications made to the curriculum outcomes to meet the student's individual learning needs.[5] Decisions about adjustments and individual learning programs should be made in conjunction with a student and their parents/carers.[6]

Age-equivalent curriculum

Some students may access the curriculum at an earlier or higher level than their age cohort for a learning area or subject. Assessment and reporting for these students will be based on an enrolled year level achievement standard that has been adjusted to reflect the complexity of the identified earlier or higher achievement standard. Unit planning documents and/or individualised curriculum plans provide evidence of age-equivalent curriculum. Schools are encouraged to contact the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) at **australiancurriculum@qcaa.qld.edu.au** when considering the provision of age-equivalent curriculum.

[3] Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (s9(1)(a) and s9(1)(d)).

[4] ACARA 2024, *Australian Curriculum v9: Planning for diversity.*

[5] Forlin, C 2019, *Best practice adjustments for students with disability: A report for the National School Resourcing Board.*

[6] Department of Education, *Disability Standards for Education 2005, Australian Government.*

Years 11 and 12

Under section 9(4) of the Regulation, a school accredited to provide senior secondary education must implement:

a. If the school is offering a subject for which there is a syllabus developed, purchased or revised by the QCAA under the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014, section 9 — the syllabus; or

b. A program or syllabus endorsed by the QCAA as appropriate for senior secondary education; or

c. A program authorised by the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

In addition, a school's written educational program must provide a breadth, depth and balance of learning appropriate to students' phases of development and across an appropriate range of learning areas (see section 9(1)(c) of the Regulation).

Queensland Certificate of Education and Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement

By implementing an educational program that enables students to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), non-state schools meet the requirement to provide an appropriate breadth, depth and balance of learning for their senior secondary students.

For students to receive a QCE, they must achieve the set amount of learning, in the set standard, in a set pattern, while meeting literacy and numeracy requirements. The flexibility of the QCE enables students to choose from a wide range of learning options to suit their interests and career goals.

The Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA) is a more appropriate qualification for students who have disabilities that affect learning that are not primarily due to socioeconomic, cultural and/or linguistic factors.

Further information about what can be included in a school's senior secondary educational program is available in the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook* on the QCAA website.

International Baccalaureate

Schools that offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) program must do so with fidelity to the IB's program standards, practices, rules and regulations. Schools should visit the International Baccalaureate Organisation website for their requirements.

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education and training (VET) provides pathways for young people, including those seeking further education and training and those seeking employment skills. The completion of a VET course may support student engagement during the pathways years through hands-on training and the development of industry-specific knowledge, understanding and skills.

Schools make decisions, in consultation with parents/carers and their governing body, about when students would benefit from access to VET prior to their senior secondary enrolment. Schools must meet all requirements of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)[7] including ensuring that VET is delivered by registered training organisations (RTOs). The QCAA, as delegate for ASQA, registers and reviews Queensland school RTOs. Further information for schools registered as RTOs is available on the QCAA website.

[7] Australian Skills Quality Authority 2024.

Evidence of implementation

The non-state schools' accreditation process supports the provision of quality education and maintains public confidence in Queensland's non-state schools. The documentation outlined in the following section supports schools to provide evidence of compliance with section 9(2) of the Regulation.

Prep to Year 10

Three levels of planning

Non-state schools are required to demonstrate the scope and implementation of the curriculum for each phase of learning in Prep–Year 10. Evidence should be provided for 3 levels of planning:

- whole school
- year level or band
- units.

The format of levels of planning documents is a school-based decision. The QCAA P–10 planning app provides downloadable data summaries and reports that can be used as evidence of the 3 levels of planning. Information on the P–10 Planning app is available on the QCAA website.

Evidence of the requirements for each level of planning are outlined below.

Whole-school plans

Whole-school curriculum plans explain the contextual decisions that underpin a school's approach to implementation of the curriculum. A school's whole-school curriculum plan must:

- reference the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration
- show how teaching and learning reflects the school's context, including its vision, mission and values. This could include, e.g.
  - how and why decisions were made related to teaching time based on the minimum requirements
  - an explanation of how flexible curriculum provisions meet the needs and interests of students
  - system or school priorities, e.g. focus on literacy or numeracy
- indicate how data is gathered to inform and evaluate decisions about teaching and learning
- explain the school's reporting structures, e.g. that the school reports on student achievement using a 5-point scale twice each year and that there are opportunities for parents to meet with teachers at least twice a year.

Year level or band plans

Year level or band plans identify the specific teaching, learning and assessment within a learning area. They inform the whole school plan and guide the development of unit overviews. A year level or band plan must:

- outline the sequence of learning and assessment for the year/band
- identify how evidence of student learning is gathered, and how and where students will have opportunities to demonstrate their learning against the achievement standard.

General capabilities and cross curriculum priorities may be included in year level or band plans, but evidence of implementation of these dimensions of the Australian Curriculum is not required for the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board review program.

Unit plans

Unit plans are informed by the year level/band plan. They identify the specific curriculum content, teaching strategies and assessment, and add clarity to the year level or band plan. Unit plans must provide detail about:

- the focus and context for the learning, aligned to the specific demands of the assessment
- the sequence of teaching and learning for the range of learners in the class
- appropriate pedagogy to support and engage all learners
- adjustments and tailored supports to cater for the varied needs, abilities and interests of all students
- how students will be assessed, including students accessing an individual learning program, aligned to the relevant aspects of the achievement standard, or general capabilities for students on a highly individualised curriculum plan.

Years 11 and 12

Schools must provide the required evidence that all teaching, learning and assessment programs comply with the quality assurance and certification requirements of the relevant authorities, for example:

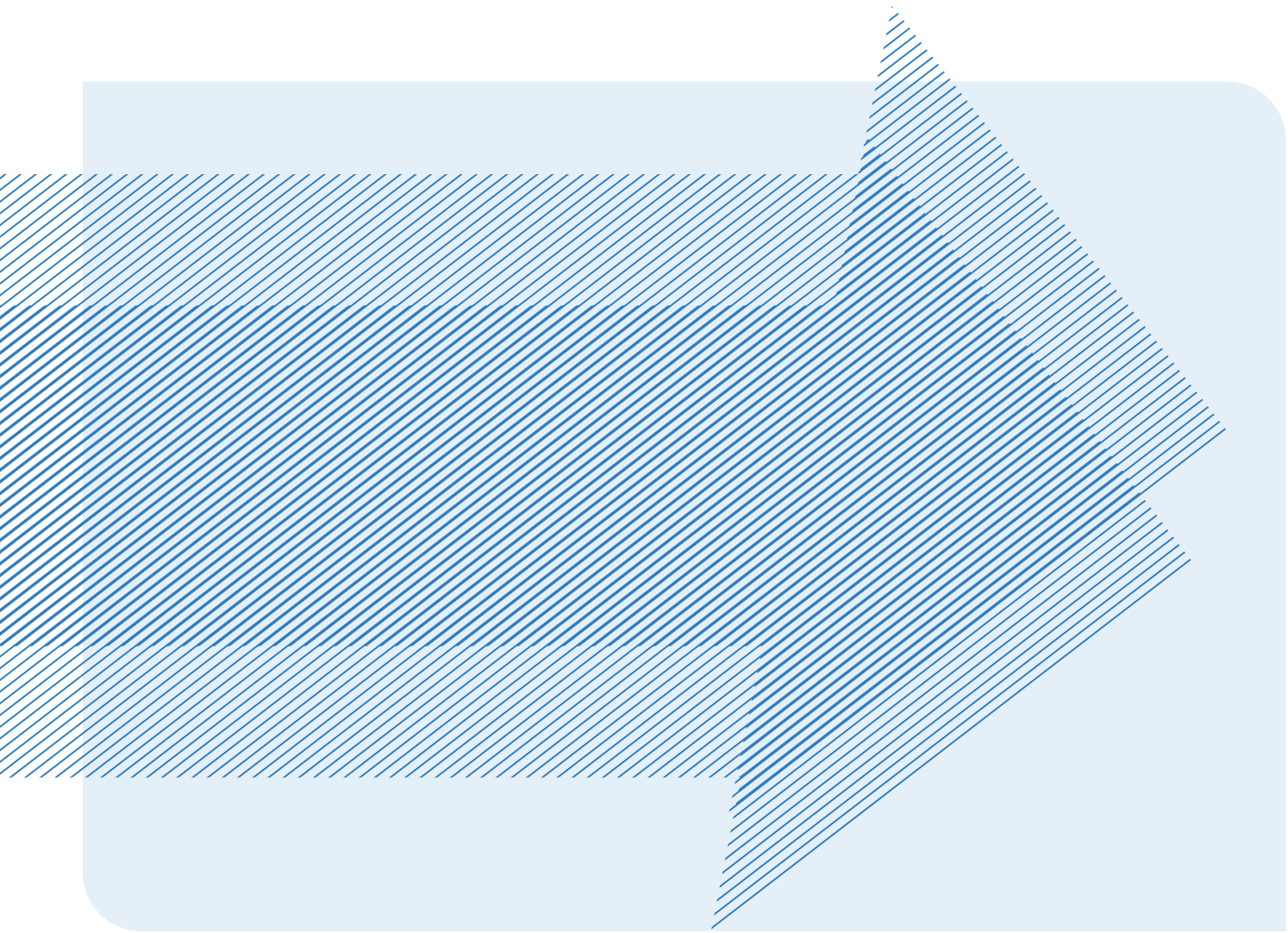
- the QCAA for both the QCE and QCIA. Requirements for senior certification are detailed in the QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook, which is available via the QCAA website
- ASQA for VET
- the International Baccalaureate Organisation for the IB.

Reporting

Schools and teachers are required to systematically collect evidence of assessment of learning to inform reporting processes. The Australian Government has set out specific requirements for Years 1 to 10 for schools to provide parents and carers with reports twice a year reported for each subject studied in terms of A–E (or an equivalent 5-point scale). Each report must include an assessment of the student's achievement and progress against any available national standards.[8] For Prep–Year 10, the national standards refer to the Australian Curriculum achievement standards. In Queensland, the achievement standard represents the C standard (or equivalent) on a 5-point scale.

Reporting for students on adjusted curriculum levels

Schools consult with parents and carers to decide when to provide adjusted or accelerated learning and assessment programs that meet students' diverse learning needs. When reporting achievement for these students, teachers clearly identify the enrolled year level, learning area and achievement standard against which judgments have been made.

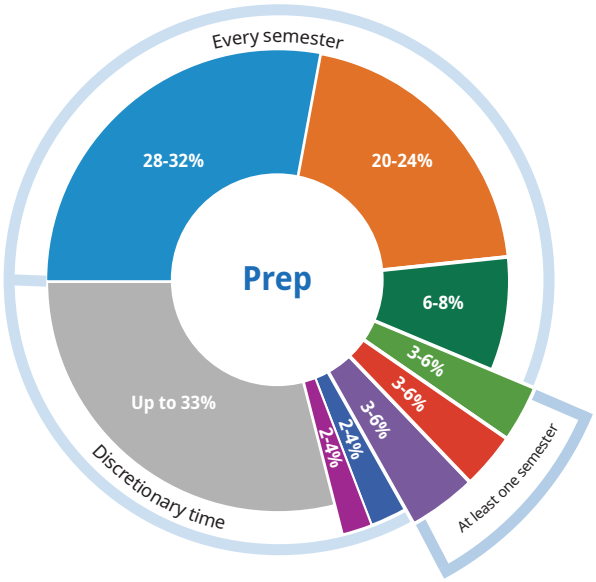


[8] Australian Education Regulations 2023, s 59.

Implementation phases

Prep to Year 2 (Foundations phase)

In Prep to Year 2, when determining an **appropriate range of learning areas,** priority is given to literacy and numeracy development (primarily through English and Mathematics) as the foundational skills that will be developed and then applied across the years of schooling. Priority is also given to physical activity and the development of movement skills, and safe and healthy personal practices.[9]



Teach, assess and report

- English
- Mathematics
- HPE

Teach

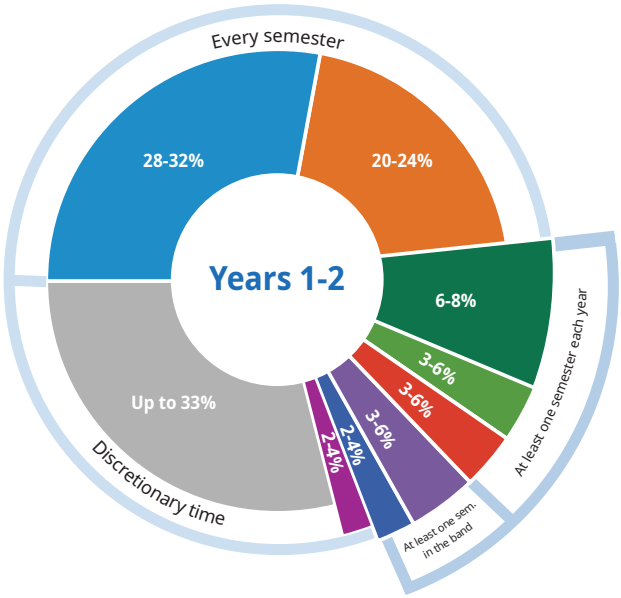
- Science
- HASS

The Arts	Students should learn at least two Arts subjects.

Optional

- Technologies

Languages	• Schools may also offer a different language from those listed in the Australian Curriculum to suit their context. Schools will need to exercise their professional judgement in developing and delivering alternative language curriculum. • Schools decide whether to teach, assess and report on Languages by considering access to appropriate resources.



Teach, assess and report

- English
- Mathematics
- HPE
- Science
- HASS

The Arts	Students should learn at least two Arts subjects.

- Technologies

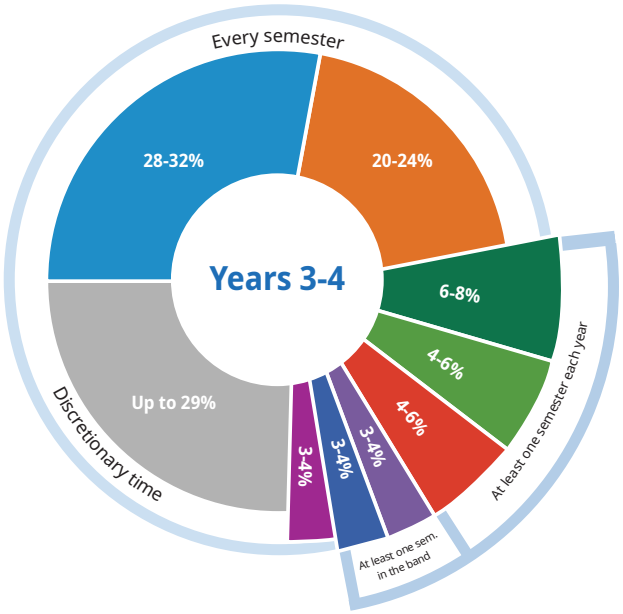
Optional

Languages	• Schools may also offer a different language from those listed in the Australian Curriculum to suit their context. Schools will need to exercise their professional judgement in developing and delivering alternative language curriculum. • Schools decide whether to teach, assess and report on Languages by considering access to appropriate resources.

[9] ACARA 2020, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 5.0.*

Years 3 to 6 (Breadth phase — primary)

In Years 3 to Year 6, the provision of an **appropriate range of learning areas** continues to prioritise English (and literacy development) and Mathematics (and numeracy development) together with opportunities for students to engage with a range of learning areas.[10]

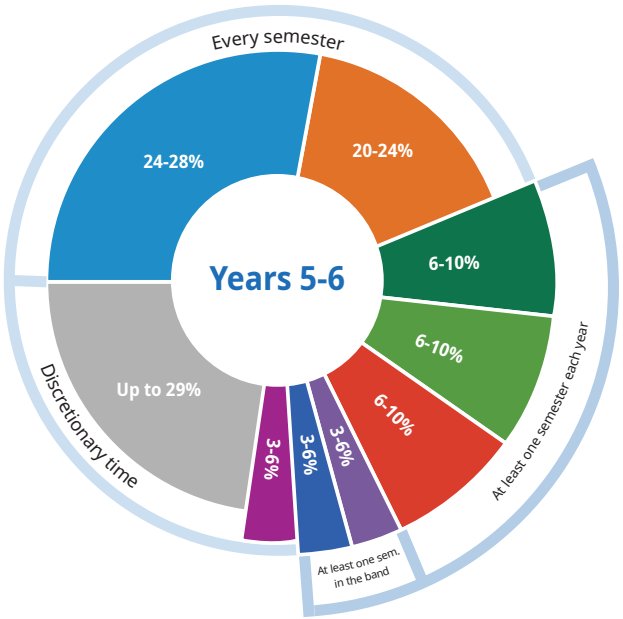


Teach, assess and report

English	
Mathematics	
HPE	
Science	
HASS	
The Arts	Students should learn at least two Arts subjects.
Technologies	

Optional

Languages	• Schools may also offer a different language from those listed in the Australian Curriculum to suit their context. Schools will need to exercise their professional judgement in developing and delivering alternative language curriculum. • Schools decide whether to teach, assess and report on Languages by considering access to appropriate resources.



Teach, assess and report

English	
Mathematics	
HPE	
Science	
HASS	
The Arts	Students should learn at least two Arts subjects.
Technologies	

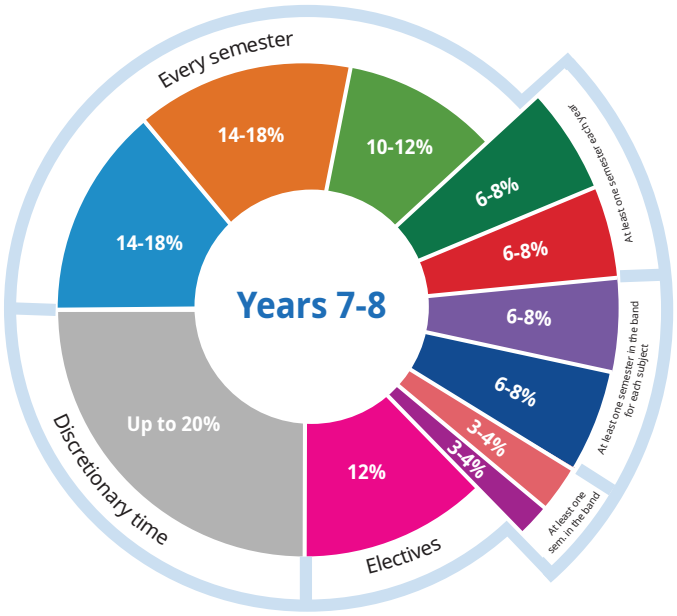
Optional

Languages	• Schools may also offer a different language from those listed in the Australian Curriculum to suit their context. Schools will need to exercise their professional judgement in developing and delivering alternative language curriculum. • Schools decide whether to teach, assess and report on Languages by considering access to appropriate resources.

[10] ACARA 2020, The Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 5.0.

Years 7 and 8 (Breadth phase — lower secondary)

In Years 7 and 8, learning area knowledge, understanding and skills are consolidated, positioning students for future learning pathways. Provision of **appropriate learning** areas provides breadth of learning and opportunities for students to deepen their learning according to their interests and needs. Literacy and numeracy development remain a priority.[11]



Teach, assess and report

English	
Mathematics	
Science	
HPE	
History / **Geography**	**Economics** and **Business**, and **Civics** and **Citizenship** optional.
The Arts	Students should learn at least two Arts subjects.
Technologies	
Languages	Schools may also offer a different language from those listed in the Australian Curriculum to suit their contexts. Schools will need to exercise their professional judgement in developing and delivering alternative language curriculum.
Electives	Some learning areas are only required to be offered for one semester within a year or band. This allows schools to teach, assess and report on electives across Years 7 and 8 in the remaining curriculum time. These electives should be drawn from the Australian Curriculum learning areas, e.g. Economics and Business may be offered as an Australian Curriculum elective.

Years 9 and 10 (Pathways and programs phase)

In Years 9 and 10 students make choices about elective areas of study that deepen their understanding and support future pathways. They can commence senior secondary pathways and programs, including VET and/or aspects of their senior school qualification (QCE or QCIA), in conjunction with the Australian Curriculum. This means that schools can design learning programs for the Pathways and programs phase based on either the Australian Curriculum or senior secondary studies drawn from equivalent curriculum areas where students:

- have already demonstrated achievement of the knowledge, understanding and skills of Year 10 Australian Curriculum
- have specific learning needs and therefore are unable to meet the knowledge, understanding and skills of Year 10 through demonstration of the achievement standards.

[11] ACARA 2020, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 5.0.*

Preparing for senior schooling

Year 10 is the final year of the Australian Curriculum, which forms the foundation knowledge, understanding and skills required for senior schooling. It is also the start of the senior phase of learning, where students make important decisions about their senior schooling and education, training and career goals.

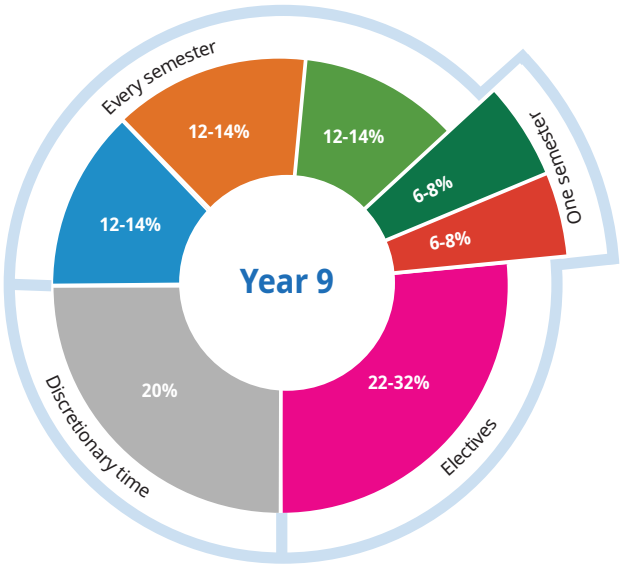
Schools design and deliver their Year 10 program to ensure students:

- complete the P–10 Australian Curriculum knowledge, understanding and skills
- receive the necessary advice, guidance and preparation to start senior studies, e.g. through Senior Education and Training (SET) plans.

Schools can further support students' preparation for senior pathways by:

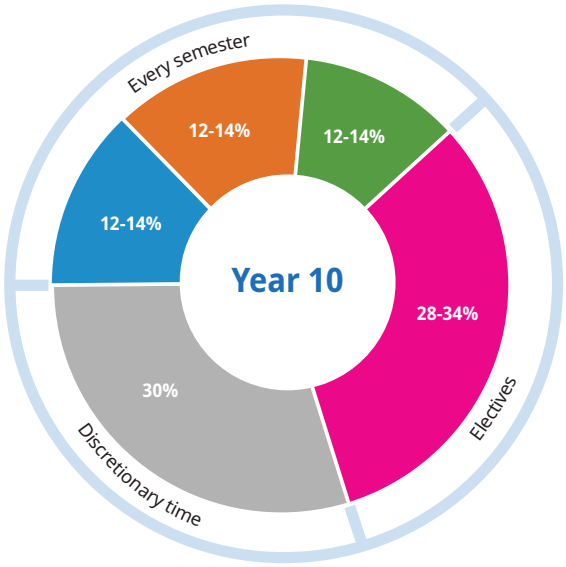
- developing programs and pathways, in consultation with students and their parents/carers
- identifying opportunities within the Year 10 Australian Curriculum to introduce concepts and skills that provide a foundation for the corresponding senior syllabus
- offering subjects adapted from Australian Curriculum learning areas or subjects
- addressing students' individual needs through differentiation.

Years 9 and 10 (Pathways and programs phase)



Teach, assess and report

English	
Mathematics	
Science	
HPE	
History	
Electives	Schools: • teach, assess and report on electives using the Australian Curriculum achievement standards and • may **include** VET studies, where age appropriate.



Teach, assess and report

English	Teach, assess and report on in each semester and/or on subjects *adapted from* the AC English and/or provide the QCAA Short Course in Literacy.
Mathematics	Teach, assess and report on in each semester and/or on subjects *adapted from* the AC Mathematics and/or provide the QCAA Short Course in Numeracy.
Science	Teach, assess and report on in each semester and/or on subjects *adapted from* the AC Science and/or provide the QCAA Science in Practice.

(Adapted from means a subject that is based on identification of aspects of an Australian Curriculum achievement standard rather than covering the whole achievement standard, e.g. a Chemistry subject may be designed based on selected aspects of the Science achievement standard. This means that some students may not study all the achievement standard in Year 10.)

Electives

- Schools may:
  - — teach, assess and report using the AC achievement standards, and/or
  - — teach, assess and report on subjects ***adapted from*** AC learning areas, and/or
  - — include senior pathways, e.g. VET.
- Decisions about offering subjects drawn from selected aspects of the achievement standard in Year 10 should be made in consultation with the school's governing body.
- Timetabled hours for the short courses are at the discretion of the school but should be no less than 55 hours per course.

References

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2012, *Curriculum design paper Version 3.1*, https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/07_04_Curriculum_Design_Paper_version_3_1_June_2012.pdf

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