NSW Response to the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business

Introduction
The Board of Studies NSW is working with education sectors and teachers in NSW to support the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in the development of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business and to provide input and feedback on the development of this curriculum. This report is the summary of the NSW consultation feedback to ACARA regarding the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business.

The Board of Studies NSW conducted consultation on the draft shape paper. The consultation included:
- targeted focus groups for teachers (K–12) and non-school based curriculum experts
- an online survey on the Board’s website, available from 19 August until 19 October 2012.

Summary of Key Issues
Feedback gathered through consultation indicated support for Economics and Business education as a valued part of the curriculum.

The following key issues were raised:

- There was support for the interrelated approach of Economics and Business in the curriculum; however, both aspects of the curriculum should be equally balanced. Currently Business-related matters are under-represented in the draft shape paper.

Consultation indicates support for the inclusion of Economics and Business in the curriculum and the approach to interrelate them in Years 5–10. However, there is concern that Business-related curriculum is not appropriately represented in the document and that Economics-related curriculum appears to have pre-eminence as the ‘underpinning discipline’. It is suggested that ‘Business’ be included equally with ‘Economics’ in an appropriate and interrelated manner. There is also support for the inclusion of Economics, Business and Accounting as separate subjects in the senior years.

- The inclusion of consumer and financial literacy is supported.

It is recognised that the current mandatory curriculum has provided learning for consumer and financial literacy. Mathematics includes consumer-related mathematics and elective Years 9–10 Commerce, includes learning for consumer and financial literacy. The inclusion of consumer and financial literacy in the shape paper is supported, as is the reference to the
National Consumer and Financial Literacy Framework from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

- There is a need to build stronger learning contexts into the document, providing progression of learning, from an emphasis on a personal context in the earlier years, to an emphasis on national then global contexts in the middle and later years.

While there is a reasonable ‘flow’ of learning across the draft shape paper, it is recommended that the inclusion of clearer and stronger learning contexts would enhance student learning. This would include an emphasis on personal contexts in the earlier years, building on the daily experiences of younger students. In the middle and later years the emphasis would include national then global contexts, as students’ life experiences as consumers and their interactions with the business world expands, and their intellectual and social maturity develops.

- There is a need to provide more focus on ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility across the document.

The shape paper includes some reference to ethical behaviour and social responsibility for individuals and businesses. However this is inconsistent and insufficient. There needs to be further emphasis placed on ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility throughout the document. It is suggested that the Work and business environments ‘Key idea’ be replaced by an Ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility ‘Key idea’.

- The omission of Economics and Business learning from F–4 and the need for ACARA to map expected learning for these years.

The Economics and Business curriculum provides learning in Years 5 to 10 and in the senior secondary years. The omission of learning for Foundation to Year 4 was raised as a concern. The shape paper does note student prior learning about Economics and Business from F–4. Students engage with Economics and Business as consumers and interact with the wider financial world in a variety of ways prior to Year 5. The current NSW K–6 Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) syllabus includes Economics and Business learning from Kindergarten to Year 6. It is recommended that the learning pathway F–12 should be articulated and that expected prior learning F–4 be mapped.
Specific comments relating to sections of the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business

Rationale (paragraphs 1–12)
While some amendments are recommended, there was general support for the Rationale. The main concern relates to the relationship between Economics and Business and the need to have a more even balance between the two areas. Another concern was the need for more consistent inclusion of ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility.

The following recommendations are made to strengthen the Rationale:
- paragraph 3 is limited and limiting for Business, there is a need to broaden and deepen the ‘study of Business’ as indicated in paragraph 3 to more effectively and accurately reflect the integrity of the study of Business
- ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility requires greater emphasis, this should have a separate paragraph and be integrated across other appropriate paragraphs, including paragraph 10.

Aims (paragraphs 13–14)
The Aims were broadly supported. Suggestions to strengthen the Aims include:
- strengthen the emphasis on ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility
- include of the concept of innovation as an aspect of enterprising behaviours (paragraph 14 iv)
- reduce the current emphasis on the ‘contemporary and likely future of work’ to a more appropriate emphasis on ‘likely future economic and business environments’ (paragraph 14 v).

Scope of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business (paragraphs 15–17)
The use of ‘Key ideas’ is supported, however the emphasis of the Work and business environments is questioned. There is an over emphasis on the nature and place of work, including both current and future work. This emphasis with work seems at odds with the Economics and Business focus of the draft shape paper. While recognition of work is appropriate, the proposal for a ‘Key idea’ based on work is not suitable. Work in this curriculum is likely to be quite limiting. It is suggested a more appropriate ‘Key idea’ would be Ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility. While it is noted that the draft shape paper ‘Key ideas’ are ‘underpinned by active, informed and ethical decision-making’, this is considered insufficient.

The nature of Economics and Business (paragraphs 18–21)
The discussion in this section is broadly supported. The potential for the Economics and Business curriculum to link to other learning areas is recognised. The application of an inquiry approach is suitable but should not dominate or constrain the implementation of the curriculum for teachers and schools.
How is the Economics and Business curriculum organised? (paragraphs 22–25)
The two strands of ‘Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding’ and ‘Economics and Business Skills’ are supported. Within each strand there are areas that could be further developed or emphasised.

For the ‘Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding’ strand the following are suggested for inclusion:
- income distribution in paragraph 24 a) and/or b) and/or c)
- human resources in paragraph 24 g)
- remove the term ‘such as’ from paragraph 24 g), clarity is required and this is the only instance this term is used in this section.

Within the ‘Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding’ strand there is the opportunity to be clearer around student learning contexts. Including an emphasis on personal contexts in the earlier years, to build on the daily experiences of younger students, is suggested. This should develop to an emphasis on national then global contexts in the middle and later Years as student experiences as consumers grow, their interactions with the business world expand and they mature intellectually and socially.

For the ‘Economics and Business Skills’ strand the following are suggested for inclusion:
- the application of ICT skills in paragraph 25 b), c) and d)
- problem-solving skills as part of paragraph 25 c) and d)
- leadership and management as part of paragraph 25 d).

The ‘Economics and Business Skills’ strand needs to emphasise that the skills are to be learnt and applied in context not in isolation.

Economics and Business F–12 (paragraphs 26–49)
A scope and sequence of expected prior learning Foundation to Year 4 should be developed. The Economics and Business curriculum currently only proposes learning in Years 5 to 10 and in the senior secondary years. Students engage as consumers and interact with the economy and the financial world in a variety of ways prior to Year 5. Such a scope and sequence would provide clarity about continuity of student learning for the curriculum writers as the final Economics and Business curriculum is developed. It is important to note that the current NSW K–6 Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) syllabus includes specific learning related to Economics and Business across all Years.

The draft shape paper is quite limited in its description of what will be addressed in the proposed curriculum across the Years. More detailed feedback will be provided once the draft curriculum is presented for consultation.

Years 5–6
There is concern that some concepts and aspects of expected learning are overly complex and set at too high a level for the majority of students in these Years. There is also concern that the amount of content proposed exceeds what can be covered in the typical time allocated in classes for the learning area in Years 5 and 6. It may be better to focus on deeper learning of fewer concepts and/or less content.
A further suggestion is that the learning in these Years needs to have a ‘personal’ focus in a local context so students can relate their individual experiences to the learning.

**Years 7–8**
There is a need to ensure that the learning is not too complex and that students engage personally with the expected learning content and concepts. Feedback indicated that a lot of learning was proposed and some of it could be quite challenging for typical students. The concept of building on previous learning is appropriate, however this should not provide overlap but rather extend and deepen prior learning. The development of consumer and financial literacy skills is supported.

**Years 9–10**
The indication of the content appears appropriate. Again, building on previous learning should not overlap but extend and deepen student learning. The addition of choice for schools within the curriculum is welcome. It is a feature that should be extended across the curriculum, not just in Years 9 and 10. The use of ‘events, issues or areas of interest’ is supported, however the example from the sports industry is perhaps not the most suitable for the target group. Events or issues need to be more relevant to the students’ age and stage of learning.

**Senior Secondary**
There is limited information provided for the senior years. This particularly applies to paragraph 46 for the Business course. While the theories of management have their place, the study of management in actual businesses is more relevant and should be emphasised. There is no context provided for Business, which requires clarification in relation to its local, national or global emphasis.

The provision of three senior subjects is supported. In relation to the Accounting course it was suggested that the emphasis should be on the principles of financial transactions and their analysis rather than the ‘recording and reporting’ of transactions.

**Diversity of learners and the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business**
(paragraphs 50–54)
The recognition of the diversity of learners is a positive aspect of the draft shape paper. The way this is translated into the actual curriculum will be need to be monitored.

**General Capabilities and the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business**
(paragraphs 55–69)
The descriptions in the general capabilities were generally endorsed as appropriate. The ‘Ethical behaviour’ capability was not sufficiently reflected across the document and requires strengthening.
Cross-curriculum priorities and the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business
(paragraphs 70–77)
The integration of cross-curriculum priorities in Economics and Business was supported in consultation. There is a responsibility to ensure that these are represented in an authentic way and integrated appropriately. Inappropriate and tokenistic inclusions should be avoided.

Key terms and concepts
The inclusion of a glossary of key terms and concepts is supported as essential information to ensure a consistent approach by curriculum writers and consistent interpretation by teachers. There is a need to provide more business-related terms and concepts to ensure a balance with economics-related terms. As many of these terms are complex and frequently misunderstood, a definition would assist in providing clarity.

Appendix 1
An inquiry approach is supported although the approach indicated in appendix 1 is only one of a number of possible inquiry based approaches. The curriculum should explore more broadly ways to promote student learning through inquiry.