



Draft Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum English

**Consultation Report
September 2012**

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1 Executive summary

Introduction

This consultation report provides a description of the consultation process and a summary and analysis of feedback received. The report presents data and findings gathered through survey responses, meetings of stakeholders, and teacher focus groups.

While it was acknowledged that significant progress had been made to address previous areas of concern, there remained areas requiring further review. Meeting participants expressed concern at the lack of an overarching framework that explains the interrelationship between the senior English subjects; their relationship to and reflection of English as a discipline; and the way each subject meets the learning needs of different cohorts of students. Further concerns expressed by participants included the limited opportunities for independent learning and the absence of metacognition for students to engage deeply with their own processes of learning. Similarly, the absence of representing as the productive partner for viewing was perceived as excluding many critical elements associated with the study of multimodal texts. Restoring the balance of content between responding and composing and strengthening the creative aspects of content across all subjects were seen as further significant areas for review.

There was also a widely held view concerning the need to review the developmental and sequential organisation of content within and across units. Many saw the content as either excessive and/or unnecessarily repetitive, while the four-unit structure of each subject was seen as challenging to sustain student engagement and not reflective of the nature of senior study in English.

Key matters

- There is a need for an overarching introductory rationale that describes and explains the scope and theoretical basis of the suite of subjects; outlines the specific emphases and differences between the subjects; and addresses their relationship to the discipline of English.
- The naming of the subjects is confusing. ‘English’ has the same label as the discipline, ‘Literature’ suggests that it alone provides for the study of literature, and ‘Essential English’ could be interpreted as the mandatory or ‘foundational’ English subject.
- The design of some units requires review to build rigour and improve sequencing within and across subjects.
- Limited opportunities for the development of independent learning and metacognition restrict student understanding of their own processes of learning.
- The four subjects focus on texts and language rather than on cognitive development or concepts, and thus do not make explicit or encourage higher-order thinking.
- Further clarification is required about the relative status of the four English subjects and whether there is an opportunity for students to move between subjects.
- The balance between the analytical and creative aspects of content requires strengthening, in particular in the Essential English and English subjects.
- More clarity is required concerning the nature of the target group for each subject – in particular, the English and Literature subjects.

- The absence of the productive mode for viewing excludes many critical elements associated with the study of multimodal texts.
- The four-unit structure of each subject, requiring one focus per semester, would present challenges to sustain student engagement.

Recommendations to ACARA

- Provide an overview that describes and explains the scope and theoretical basis of the suite of subjects and how the four English subjects relate to one another and to the subject English, so that coherence as a suite of subjects is established.
- Review the nomenclature of the English subjects to more accurately reflect their unique focus.
- Review the design of some units in some subjects to improve developmental and sequencing aspects.
- Strengthen opportunities for independent learning and metacognition across all subjects.
- Improve the balance between responding and composing and strengthen the creative aspects of content across all subjects.
- Provide guidelines to clarify the flexibility available to students to move between subjects and whether students may attempt two or more English subjects simultaneously. If these are matters for states and territories to decide, the draft document should make this clear.

2 Background information

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) released the draft senior secondary Australian curriculum for the English, Mathematics, Science and History learning areas for national consultation from 10 May until 20 July 2012.

ACARA has an established timeline that includes further curriculum refinement to follow the consultation period. It is anticipated that the final senior secondary Australian curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and History, including content and achievement standards, will be ready for publication following Ministerial endorsement in December 2012.

The focus of the Board's consultation was on the draft senior secondary Australian curriculum content. This consultation was part of a process for developing the NSW approach to integrating the Australian curriculum content into NSW syllabuses. The Board of Studies consulted with teachers, stakeholders and the public through focus group meetings in metropolitan and regional centres and through an online survey. The Board will provide ACARA with formal NSW feedback about the quality and suitability of the curriculum.

At this stage, there is no timetable for implementation of the senior secondary Australian curriculum in NSW.

The NSW consultation consisted of:

- focus group meetings at:
 - Offices of the Board of Studies on 20 June 2012 (Stakeholder FG)
 - Offices of the Board of Studies on 23 July 2012 (Sydney FG)
 - Wagga Wagga on 25 July 2012 (Wagga Wagga FG)
 - Tamworth on 30 July 2012 (Tamworth FG)
- an online survey on the Board of Studies website from 8 June to 27 July 2012
- written submissions received from:
 - the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC)
 - the English Teachers Association NSW (ETA)
 - the DEC Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate (DEC2).

Professional associations and schooling sectors conducted a range of activities during the consultation period to inform feedback to the Board.

3 Analysis

3.1 Rationale

Overall comments

Feedback on the rationales of the four English subjects identified as key issues the omission of any reference to the development of independent learning and metacognition, and the lack of an explicit reference to ‘representing’ as the active mode for viewing.

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<p>All subjects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationales do not provide students with a clear sense of the focus and target audience for each subject. • There is no overarching sense of how the four subjects connect as a suite. • The rationales omit any reference to the development of independent learning and metacognition. • There should be a stronger emphasis on creating texts. • Representing is an important omission. 	<p>Sydney FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG</p> <p>Sydney FG, ETA</p> <p>Sydney FG</p> <p>Sydney FG, Wagga Wagga FG</p>
<p>English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reference to ‘all language modes’ in the rationale of the English subject is misleading, as representing – the productive mode for viewing – is not explicit. • Some key points, such as ‘reflection’, are in the aims though not in the rationale. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC2</p>
<p>EAL/D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to articulate the literature component of EAL/D more clearly and to broaden the scope of the subject to include the creative and imaginative dimensions. • The rationale should provide a context for the English language learning described and should more accurately capture the intent of Units 1–4. • The rationale should be broadened to include learning beyond the development of English skills for academic purposes. • Some key points, such as ‘reflection’, are in the aims though not in the rationale. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p> <p>DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC2</p>

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statement that ‘learning through English language and literature influences their own and others’ personal, social and cultural identities’ should be strengthened. Reference should also be made to providing opportunities for students to bring their prior experience and cultural knowledge to learning in English. • The rationale should be revised to remove the implication that the bridging units are designed only as a foundation for work or further training. • The statements at the end about the purpose of studying Units 1–4 and Bridging Units 1–4 suggest that the units and bridging units are aimed at different groups of students. Bridging units would also be helpful to those students who intend to pursue university study but require support to enable their English language proficiency to reach an adequate level. 	<p>DEC2</p> <p>DEC2</p> <p>DEC2</p>
<p>Essential English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationale emphasises a functional focus while neglecting students’ development of the personal or affective dimensions. 	<p>ETA</p>
<p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meaning of ‘dialogue’ in the rationale is unclear. • Remove ‘other’ before ‘worlds of the imagination’. • The second paragraph does not capture the cultural diversity of Australia – ‘other cultures’ suggests that they are peripheral. 	<p>Stakeholder FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p>

3.2 Aims

Overall comments

While feedback regarding the aims across the subjects was generally positive, feedback on the EAL/D subject expressed uncertainty regarding the use of the same three dot points for all subjects. There was further inconsistency noted between the aims and rationale of this subject.

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<p>All subjects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representing as the productive mode for viewing should be added to all subjects. 	Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC2, ETA
<p>EAL/D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aims should include reference to a context for the acquisition of language skills, such as understanding and exploring ideas and appreciation of texts. This would align with the aims of the other English subjects. The aims do not always match the content. For example, the inclusion of higher-order thinking skills in the aims is welcomed, but these should also be reflected in the content. There was inconsistency noted between the aims and rationale. Another dot point – eg ‘to develop students’ English language proficiency’ – could be included in the aims to align with the rationale, which states that the subject focuses on language learning. The aims of the EAL/D subject need to include reference to students studying and appreciating literature. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p>
<p>English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aims should include reference to key aspects of English, such as metacognitive skills, independent learning, and collaborative and investigative skills. The use of ‘engagement’ in the last dot point requires strengthening to capture notions of critical analysis and reflection. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, ETA</p>
<p>Essential English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aims should make reference to metacognition. 	Tamworth FG

3.3 Organisation of content

Overall comments

Consultation feedback identified a number of instances where the sequencing of some units would benefit from review. Focus group participants also identified a need for further clarification regarding students transferring across subjects.

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<p>All subjects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four-unit structure presents challenges regarding maintaining student interest and engagement over an entire semester. • The four-unit structure is not optimal for providing a framework for teaching and learning in the senior school. • The developmental sequence of content across all subjects would benefit from review to strengthen coherence and the connections and progression of learning from the F–10 curriculum. • The interrelationship between the subjects is not clear, nor is it clear how students may move between them. • The final units of Literature and English do not provide a satisfactory culmination to students’ schooling. 	<p>Tamworth FG, ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, Wagga Wagga FG, ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC, Survey (×4)</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC, Survey (×5)</p> <p>ETA</p>
<p>EAL/D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The link between the eight units in the EAL/D course is unclear in terms of sequencing and in the relationship of Units 1–4 with the bridging units. Many students would benefit from studying Bridging Units 1 and 2 at the same time as they are studying Units 1 and 2. • There is a lack of coherence between Units 2 and 3 of the EAL/D subject. • For the EAL/D course, the content in the four units shows progression, but the boundaries provided by the unit structure are artificial and the placement of some content in some units seems arbitrary. • Greater consistency in the development and progression of skills and content across the four units in the EAL/D subject would assist teachers in mapping and programming content. • Bridging units should be renamed ‘supplementary’ or ‘complementary’ units to capture the notion that they may be studied concurrently with the core. • The naming of the subjects is confusing. ‘English’ has the same label as the discipline, ‘Literature’ suggests that it alone provides for the study of literature, and ‘Essential English’ could be interpreted as the mandatory or foundational English course. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC</p>

3.4 Content descriptions

Overall comments

While respondents identified some positive aspects of the content, including the flexibility provided by the use of broad content descriptions, concern was expressed with regard to the nature of the content, as well as the organisation, repetition and amount of content.

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<p>All subjects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The content of units is often repetitive, both across and within subjects. • There is too much content to be covered during the time allocated. • There is a lack of opportunity for creative composition across the suite of subjects. • While the continuum from F–10 into English is clearer, it is not the case for the other subjects. • There should be a stronger sense of the student as an active participant in the learning process. Improving the balance between responding and creating would assist this. • The use of broader content descriptors allows for a more integrated approach to teaching and is consistent with a more sophisticated understanding of the discipline and how to teach it. This does, however, lead to some overlap with content descriptions in F–10. • The absence of the productive mode for viewing in all subjects excludes many critical elements associated with the study of multimodal texts. • The content related to reflection is limited in scope and should include opportunities for students to reflect on the way they learn and to make their learning processes more effective. • Limited opportunities for the development of independent learning and metacognition restrict students’ understanding of their own processes of learning. • The use of the word ‘individual’ is not synonymous with independent or inquiry-based learning. • There should be greater emphasis on developing skills for 21st-century learning, such as planning, independent learning and using technology. • Unit 4 in all subjects should provide a more appropriate culmination of students’ senior school experience, rather than replicating ‘more of the same’. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, Tamworth FG, DEC2, Survey (×2)</p> <p>Sydney FG</p> <p>Wagga Wagga FG</p> <p>Sydney FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, Wagga Wagga FG</p> <p>Sydney FG, ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, ETA</p> <p>ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, ETA</p> <p>Wagga Wagga FG, ETA</p>

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The suggested text lists are unhelpful. Some titles are inappropriate for the subject to which they have been allocated. Drama and non-print texts have been omitted. • The text lists do not distinguish between subjects or illuminate the nature of the course. • The content points do not sufficiently differentiate between units. 	<p>Sydney FG, DEC</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p>
<p>English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some content descriptions are not sufficiently challenging. • More opportunities for higher-order thinking should be evident in Units 1 and 2. • The final unit does not provide a satisfactory culmination to students' schooling. • Unit 1 is very broad and would benefit from a more specific focus. • There needs to be recognition in the content of how the reader or viewer contributes to making meaning. • The place of literature should be strengthened to balance the strong literacy focus. • Units 1 and 2 are too similar. • The reference to culture is missing. • The Unit 3 comparison of texts, while valued, presents challenges for teachers to find texts that will maintain variety and interest for students over a semester. 	<p>DEC</p> <p>Tamworth FG</p> <p>ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC</p> <p>DEC</p> <p>DEC</p> <p>Tamworth FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p> <p>ETA</p>
<p>EAL/D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional specific content organisers would help teachers understand the distinctive nature of each unit and the progression of the content. • An increased focus on literature and the exploration of ideas and understanding about the self, the world and others would bring this subject into line with other English subjects and create stronger links with the F–10 curriculum. • Content descriptions do not reflect the rationale or aims. • Each unit requires a clearer focus. • There is a need to articulate the literature component of the subject more clearly. • There is an imbalance between responding and composing. More focus on composing would build students' confidence in creating their own texts. • Creating tends to be creative and persuasive, with little analytical and argumentative writing. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC, DEC2</p> <p>ETA</p>

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The units should provide greater clarity and more detail about the context and focus of each unit and the differences between them. • The content description organiser ‘Reflect on their own and others’ work’ needs to be included as EAL/D content organiser. • Greater consistency in the development and progression of skills and content across the four core units would assist teachers in mapping and programming. Unit 4 in particular should be more conceptually demanding, while the communication skills and strategies dot points need to reflect increasing sophistication and language proficiency as the units progress. • The sample text list should embrace a broader range of cultural perspectives that reflects the diverse range of students who would study this subject. • There should be more opportunities to use digital technology. • The subject does not cater for the academically able student who has limited English language. • Coherence of content could be strengthened between Units 2 and 3. • Language proficiency should be considered as an eligibility for this subject. • The inclusion of more content that requires higher-order thinking is required. • In Unit 4, it is pleasing to see the reference to investigative skills. This aspect of content should be incorporated into all English subjects. • Stronger links are required between some content and the unit descriptions. • The content points do not differentiate sufficiently between units. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, Sydney FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC2</p> <p>DEC</p> <p>Tamworth FG</p> <p>ETA</p> <p>DEC2</p> <p>DEC2</p> <p>DEC2</p> <p>ETA</p> <p>Sydney FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p>
<p>Essential English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 1 is too long and should build on the learning undertaken through F–10. • The content of this course does not cater to the needs of less able students. • The text list does not distinguish between the subjects or illuminate the nature or level of the subjects. • Some titles on the sample text lists are inappropriate for the subject to which they have been allocated. • The reference to culture is missing. • The content points do not differentiate sufficiently between units. 	<p>Stakeholder FG, Tamworth FG, DEC</p> <p>Sydney FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p> <p>DEC</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p>

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the study of a broad range of literature is encouraged, the glossary should provide a definition that reflects this inclusive view. • There is an imbalance between responding and composing. Greater focus on composing, especially students creating their own literary texts, would help to redress this imbalance. • This subject is not accessible to the less able but interested student. • The target audience for Literature appears narrow. While the subject is more demanding than English, the outcomes do not reflect this difference. • The sample text list reflects a narrow interpretation of what constitutes literature. • The order of Units 2 and 3 of Literature should be reversed to more appropriately reflect the degree of challenge presented. • Unit 3 and particularly Unit 4 require more rigour in incorporating investigation and metacognition that would engage the most able students. • This is a text-based subject rather than being concept-based, and as such it does not provide the breadth and depth required to extend the more able student. • The final unit does not provide a satisfactory culmination to students' schooling. • The content lacks coherence. 	<p>DEC</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, DEC</p> <p>Sydney FG</p> <p>Stakeholder FG, Tamworth FG</p> <p>ETA</p> <p>DEC</p> <p>ETA</p> <p>Wagga Wagga FG</p> <p>ETA</p> <p>Stakeholder FG</p>

3.5 Catering for the full range of students

Overall comments

The proposed subjects are designed to focus on texts and language and do not sufficiently foster cognitive development through conceptual and higher-order thinking. The Essential English course provides a limited functional focus for student achievement without reference to aspects of students’ personal or affective development. In summary, the subjects do not provide an appropriate level of challenge for the most able English students, nor do they cater adequately for the least able students.

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four English subjects are designed to focus on texts and language rather than cognitive development or concepts, and as such they do not encourage higher-order thinking. 	ETA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little evidence of content that would promote creative thinking. 	DEC2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Essential English subject provides a limited functional focus for student achievement without reference to aspects of students’ personal or affective development. 	ETA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four English subjects do not provide sufficiently for the most able students, nor do they cater adequately for the least able. 	Sydney FG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EAL/D subject has been designed to cater for the student of average to limited ability with few language skills and is not an accurate reflection of the full intellectual range of EAL/D students. Higher-order thinking is absent in the content. 	Stakeholder FG, ETA

3.6 General capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities

Overall comments

Generic statements regarding the cross-curriculum priorities were applied to all English subjects. Feedback on the general capabilities received during consultation was minimal.

Summary of feedback	Source(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The inclusion of texts dealing with the experiences of Aboriginal Australians and people from countries in Asia is welcomed; however, cross-curriculum priorities should be more representative of the cultural diversity in Australian society, texts and cultural content from countries in other parts of the world, and the experiences and perspectives of people from those countries who are now living in Australia.	Stakeholder FG, DEC2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The areas of numeracy, creative thinking and ICT could be more explicitly addressed in the content of the EAL/D subject.	Stakeholder FG, DEC2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The references to sustainability could be strengthened.	DEC2