



Draft K–10 Australian Curriculum: Geography

Consultation Report

April 2012

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Published by
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1 Executive Summary

Introduction

NSW has joined with the Australian Government and all other states and territories in a joint endeavour to develop an Australian curriculum. The Board of Studies NSW is responsible for advising the NSW Minister for Education on the appropriateness of the curriculum for NSW schools and the structure and process of its implementation, including with regard to the Australian curriculum.

The development of the Australian curriculum is being coordinated by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Phase 1 includes English, Mathematics, Science and History. Phase 2 comprises Geography, Languages and the Arts. The Board is providing feedback from consultation to ACARA about the *Draft Australian Curriculum: Geography*.

Key matters:

- Many aspects of the draft curriculum are supported; however, revision and amendment is required to some of the curriculum. This includes the content of Years 5 to 8, some of which may be better placed in other years.
- The two strands of *Geographical knowledge and understanding* and *Geographical inquiry and skills* are supported.
- A thorough mapping of the geographical skills from Kindergarten to Year 10 is required to indicate the sequential development of the skills.
- The provision of human geography and physical geography as central features of the curriculum is supported; however, further development and consistency of approach to physical geography across the curriculum is required.
- The Kindergarten to Year 6 structure includes organisers of ‘place’, ‘space’ and ‘environment’ which are not continued in Years 7 to 10. These organisers are not necessary and should be removed from the Kindergarten to Year 6 curriculum, thus enhancing consistency across the curriculum.
- The manner in which the geographical concept ‘environment’ is included in the curriculum is at times inconsistent. Amendment to the curriculum should provide a reduced economic focus and a more appropriate inclusion of the intrinsic value of the environment, its systems and the relationship with sustainability.

Recommendations to ACARA:

- Review content of Years 5 to 8, some of which may be better placed in other Years
- Thoroughly map the geographical skills from Kindergarten to Year 10 to indicate the sequential development of the skills
- Provide greater consistency in the approach to physical geography across the curriculum
- Remove the organisers of ‘place’, ‘space’ and ‘environment’ from the Kindergarten to Year 6 curriculum
- Revise the curriculum language to be consistent, contemporary and written in a more positive way; this incorporates the way the environment is included in the curriculum and the contribution of the discipline of Geography to sustainability.

2 Background Information

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) released the draft curriculum for Foundation (known as Kindergarten in NSW) to Year 12 for the Australian Curriculum: Geography for national consultation on 21 October 2011 until 29 February 2012. During the consultation period ACARA conducted an F–12 Geography National Panel and a mapping of the *Draft F–12 Australian Curriculum: Geography*.

ACARA has an established timeline that includes further curriculum refinement to follow the consultation period with the release of the final curriculum proposed for October 2012.

The Board of Studies is coordinating consultation in NSW in order to provide advice about the quality and suitability of the draft Geography curriculum for NSW schools. The Board conducted a coordinated set of consultation activities to engage teachers and stakeholders and to seek their feedback.

The NSW consultation focused on the K–10 Geography curriculum and consisted of:

- focus groups with teachers at
 - Bathurst on 15 November 2011
 - Penrith on 16 November 2011
 - Wagga Wagga on 22 November 2011
 - Ryde on 24 November 2011
- a reference group meeting at the Office of the Board of Studies on 9 February 2012
- afternoon meetings with teachers at
 - Hurstville on 21 February 2012
 - Mittagong on 28 February 2012
 - Castle Hill on 29 February 2012
- an online survey on the Board of Studies website from 5 December 2011 to 16 March 2012.

The Department of Education and Communities conducted a range of activities during the consultation period to inform feedback to the Board.

3 Summary of Respondents

Consultation at teacher and reference group meetings

Reference group meeting	1	Teacher meetings	7
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Online survey respondents

39 online survey responses

Years of schooling:

Kindergarten to Year 6	7	Kindergarten to Year 10	6	Years 7 to 10	26
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Sector:

Government	15	Independent	12	Catholic	7
Other	5				

Response from (optional):

Parent	0	Principal	0	School Executive	7
Student	1	Teacher	8	Other	0

Number of people contributing to the response:

1	31	2–4	5	5 or more	3
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4 Analysis

4.1 Rationale

Overall comments

The rationale is broadly supported; however, amendment in relation to strengthening the contribution of Geography to a student’s education is required. The rationale should be revisited to align with modification as the curriculum is finalised.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most respondents to the online survey agree that the rationale effectively describes the nature of Geography in the curriculum and the approaches to learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> online survey responses teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally supported; however, this will require revision once the curriculum is finalised after the consultation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally supported; however, the rationale requires revision to more clearly state the importance of Geography for student learning about their world, the environment and their communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> written submission – DEC

4.2 Aim

Overall comments

The aim is supported, although it may need adjustment as the rationale is amended.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is agreement that the aim addresses the key aspects of Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> online survey responses reference group meeting teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the aim to more directly reflect the rationale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> written submission – DEC

4.3 Organisation of content

Overall comments

While the two strands *Geographical knowledge and understanding* and *Geographical inquiry and skills* are supported, the use of additional organisers of ‘place’, ‘space’ and ‘environment’ are not supported and should be removed from the curriculum. The geographical skills need to be mapped from Kindergarten to Year 10 and the mapping included in the curriculum.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is agreement that the two strands <i>Geographical knowledge and understanding</i> and <i>Geographical inquiry and skills</i> are appropriate organisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting teacher meetings online survey responses written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is agreement that the geographical concepts will assist the teaching of Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is concern about the use of geographical concepts as organisers in Kindergarten to Year 6; their use as organisers is not supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting teacher meetings written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The geographical skills need to be thoroughly mapped across Kindergarten to Year 10 and this mapping included within the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting teacher meetings written submission – DEC individual submission 1 individual submission 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten to Year 6 has three curriculum focus areas while Years 7–10 has one curriculum focus; a specific focus for Years 7–8 and separate focus for Years 9–10 is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum would be enhanced by the use of diagrammatic representation of key aspects of the structure and organisation of the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher meetings

4.4 Content descriptions

Overall comments

While feedback from consultation indicated general support for the content descriptions, there are a number of matters that need to be addressed. Of particular note are:

- the sequencing of content for later primary/early secondary Years
- the need to provide more depth, breadth and clarity for physical geography
- the overall emphasis within the human geography content on economic rather than cultural and social geography
- the need to review unit titles across the curriculum to better reflect the intended learning
- the consistency of use of geographical terminology
- the use of positive language that allows the issues to be investigated, the tools of Geography applied to their analysis, and the sustainable management of the physical and built environment addressed.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sequencing of content, particularly for later primary, early secondary, needs to be reconsidered in light of student cognitive development and whether the sequence of content is logical and appropriate to the students' stage of development – suggest review the sequence of topics, especially in Years 5 to 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online survey responses • written submission – DEC • individual submission 1 • reference group meeting • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The content needs to be broadened and not too specific, allowing for teachers to implement it within local contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written submission – DEC • individual submission 1 • reference group meeting • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most respondents indicated that the current curriculum was 'teachable', given some amendment; around a third of respondents are unsure whether the content descriptions focus on the essential learning for Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online survey responses • reference group meeting • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is inconsistent use of the geographical concepts across the curriculum, particularly the concept 'space' – the application and inclusion of the seven geographical concepts needs to be more effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference group meeting • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around half the respondents to the online survey consider that the content descriptions describe the quality of learning expected of students at each Year of schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of the curriculum (particularly Years 9 and 10) are identified as having too much content for the available hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The depth and balance of content and learning expectations across the curriculum varies significantly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written submission – DEC

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within human geography there is too much emphasis on economic rather than cultural and social geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference group meeting • teacher meetings • written submission – DEC • individual submission 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer the inclusion of more options within units across the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The placement and language around geographical processes, biophysical interactions and environmental issues need further development and refinement – the terminology needs to be reviewed for consistency and geographical accuracy; the use of more specific geographical terminology would enhance the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written submission – DEC • reference group meeting • teacher meetings • individual submission 1 • individual submission 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum needs to be written with positive language, rather than an overall negative approach taken in relation to geographical issues. This would allow the issues to be investigated, the tools of Geography applied to their analysis and the sustainable management of the physical and built environment addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference group meeting • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around half the respondents to the online survey consider that the content descriptions describe the quality of learning expected of students at each Year of schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately half the respondents indicated that the content descriptions provide an appropriate level of specificity to support teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titles of units across the curriculum should be reviewed to better reflect the intended learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written submission – DEC • reference group meeting • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inquiry-based approach is supported and will be assisted by the increasing use of technology in classrooms – some respondents noted that an over-emphasis on the inquiry approach may pose difficulties for lower-ability students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of concepts, including spatial awareness, needs to be developed appropriately, this is currently not the case, especially in the early Years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual submission 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civics and citizenship is not evident in the curriculum and should be more clear – as is currently the case in the NSW syllabuses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference group meeting • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical approaches towards the environment and other aspects of the curriculum need to be more apparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose the inclusion of more place geography – linked to range of scales and include a global approach, not one limited to Asia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher meetings

4.5 Achievement standards

Overall comments

While the achievement standards are supported generally, the language needs to be reviewed to be more widely accessible. Some suggested that achievement standards be placed at the beginning of units to assist the learning process.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The structure for the achievement standards is supported; however, they require more development to align with the content as presented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting teacher meetings written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language needs to be more accessible to students, parents and teachers; be more consistent and further aligned with the skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest the achievement standards be located at the front of units rather than at the end; consider writing the achievement standards in point form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around half the survey respondents agree that the achievement standards are realistic, but nearly a quarter are unsure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinions are divided as to whether the achievement standards will allow for appropriate assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey responses

4.6 Catering for the full range of students

Overall comments

While most respondents indicated the curriculum caters for a range of student needs and abilities, some concern was raised about the suitability of the curriculum for more able students as well as lower-ability students.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some survey respondents commented that the curriculum was sufficiently flexible to allow teachers to differentiate teaching and learning programs to cater for a range of student needs and abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents were concerned that expectations are too high for average and lower-ability students, particularly at the Years 7 and 8 levels – others indicated that there is little to extend the more able students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> online survey responses reference group meeting teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information provided regarding students with a disability and English as an additional language or dialect is supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> written submission – DEC

4.7 General capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities

Overall comments

The majority of responses indicated that the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities have been implemented effectively, noting the cross-curriculum priorities are integral to Geography.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that appropriate emphasis is given to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around half of respondents consider that the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are represented in authentic ways, but a third of respondents are unsure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the general capabilities are supported, the descriptions in the context of Geography require revision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geographical inquiry and skills strand provides much of the context for the general capabilities in Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cross-curriculum priorities are integral to the content descriptions and context of Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference group meeting • teacher meetings • written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental actions related to sustainability need to be strengthened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference group meeting • teacher meetings • written submission – DEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum content may be difficult for some schools to implement given limited access to local Aboriginal communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference group meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the inclusion of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities appears to be haphazard and at times tokenistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual submission 1

4.8 Other comments

Overall comments

Respondents support the central place of fieldwork within the curriculum. There is also support for the inclusion of a glossary. There were many requests for the inclusion of areas of the world other than Australia and Asia to be evident in the curriculum. There is a need for ACARA to carefully map Geography to other curriculum areas, particularly Science and Mathematics, to ensure complementary, sequenced learning with no overlap.

Summary of feedback	Source/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The glossary is supported, although some refinement is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> written submission – DEC reference group meeting teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The acceptance of fieldwork and outdoor education as central to Geography is welcomed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual submission 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Geography curriculum needs to be carefully aligned with the Science and Mathematics curriculum to ensure complementary, sequenced learning with no overlap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting teacher meetings individual submission 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This curriculum is too narrow for a global world – emphasis on Asia noted; however, the other areas of the world need to be included eg North America, Africa, Europe, Middle East, Russia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting teacher meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to make clear how literacy is to be addressed through Geography with the emphasis on inquiry-based learning in Kindergarten to Year 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference group meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some survey respondents indicate that greater specificity and/or consistency is needed in various parts of the syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> online survey responses

4.9 Quantitative analysis of survey responses

Survey Item	Number of responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Curriculum structure						
1. The rationale effectively describes the nature of Geography in the curriculum.	38	9	21	4	3	1
2. The rationale effectively describes the approaches to learning Geography.	37	6	22	4	4	1
3. The aims address the key aspects of Geography.	36	6	19	4	7	0
4. The two strands ‘Geographical knowledge and understanding’ and ‘Geographical inquiry and skills’ are appropriate organisers for the curriculum.	37	8	20	6	0	3
5. The geographical concepts will assist the teaching of Geography.	37	7	18	8	2	2
Curriculum content						
6. The content descriptions describe what should be taught in Geography.	30	5	17	3	4	1
7. The content descriptions describe the quality of learning expected of students at each year of schooling.	31	3	13	8	5	2
8. The content descriptions focus on the essential learning for Geography.	31	3	11	11	4	2
9. The sequence of content is logical and appropriate to the students’ stage of development.	31	4	10	7	7	3
10. The descriptions of content provide an appropriate level of specificity to support the teaching of Geography.	31	4	10	13	2	2
Achievement standards						
11. The achievement standards are realistic for the stages of learning.	30	5	12	8	1	4
12. The achievement standards allow for appropriate assessment of student achievement in Geography.	31	7	11	9	3	1
General capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities						
13. Appropriate emphasis is given to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.	32	5	15	8	3	1
14. The general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are represented in authentic ways.	32	3	13	11	3	2

5 Respondents

5.1 Written submissions from individuals and groups

Organisations, groups and individuals	Code
NSW Department of Education and Communities	DEC
Catholic Education Office – Diocese of Wollongong	CEOW (via survey)
Dr Paul Ganderton	individual submission 1
Mr Matthew Lloyd, Barker College, Sydney	individual submission 2