NSW SENIOR SECONDARY REVIEW & EVALUATION: ENGLISH

REFERENCE REPORT

1.   Historical overview

Courses

In response to the NSW Government's White Paper *Securing their Future*, the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) undertook a comprehensive review of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) in the late 1990s. The current Stage 6 English courses (apart from English Studies) were developed as part of that process. The current English Stage 6 Syllabus was approved in June 1999, implemented for the Preliminary cohort in 2000, and first examined for the HSC in 2001. The syllabus provides for the Area of Study, electives and texts to be prescribed in a separate document, allowing for these to be reviewed every four to six years.

In recognition of the principle that the post-compulsory years of schooling should cater for all students who choose to participate, eight Stage 6 Life Skills courses were also developed in 1999, including one for English. These courses extended the curriculum and reporting arrangements that were established in Stage 5 to HSC students with intellectual disabilities. The English Life Skills course provides a curriculum option for students unable to access the outcomes and content of the regular English syllabus. The English Life Skills course has Board Developed status and can be used to meet the requirements for the award of the HSC without an external examination. Minor amendments were made to the guidelines and assessment advice for the English Life Skills course in 2007.

In May 2009, the BOSTES approved the development of a new Content Endorsed Course, English Studies, to be run as a pilot in a small number of schools during 2010 and 2011. The course satisfies the requirement for the mandatory study of English, but it does not have an external examination and cannot contribute towards an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

The introduction of English Studies emanated from concerns about the capacity of the existing senior secondary English courses to meet the needs of the full range of students, in view of the legislative changes to the minimum school leaving age. In particular, the course was designed for students wishing to complete Year 12 and the HSC, but not intending to follow a university pathway.

Since 2010, the BOSTES has been regularly monitoring and evaluating the implementation of English Studies, and has extended the pilot to 2016 for all schools wishing to offer the course. The course addresses the needs of students who would have previously left school before the HSC and provides an alternative for some students who would have previously undertaken English Standard or English as a Second Language (ESL). The course is popular with a range of students in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

Student numbers are beginning to plateau after rapid growth when the course was first made available to all schools. In 2013, around 400 schools (about 50% of all schools with a senior secondary cohort) were offering English Studies. The course was studied by about 9.6% of Preliminary English students and 9.0% of HSC English students.

In 2013, the BOSTES determined that the Stage 6 English prescriptions will in future be reviewed at six-yearly intervals, with a review of the Area of Study to be on a four-yearly cycle. The latest version of the prescriptions document was released in July 2013, for implementation from 2015 for the HSC.

Assessment and examinations

In 2008, the BOSTES undertook a major review of HSC assessment, and changes to examination specifications and school assessment requirements were implemented for HSC courses from 2010. The internal assessment requirements for the Extension 1 and 2 courses were simplified and the external examination requirements for English Extension 2 required that the Reflection Statement be marked separately from the Major Work. Subsequent refinements have been made to English Extension 2 to introduce greater comparability between various forms of projects.

Other assessment and examining issues arising from the review were not pursued at that time. The broad directions proposed in the report *NSW Senior Secondary Review and Evaluation: English, Mathematics, Science and History* draws on findings from the consultations conducted in 2008, particularly in relation to assessment and examining of the English Standard, Advanced and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses.

2. Course requirements

The NSW senior courses form a cohesive suite of courses connected by an overarching framework or philosophy that explains their reflection of the subject English and explicates the essential understanding to be gained from studying English in any course. These courses have been designed to cater for the full range of students and offer flexibility for teachers to develop a program of study that is suited to the needs and interests of students, as well as for students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of ways. Elective options within courses cater for the diversity of students. Investigation, independent learning and reflection on learning are provided in the outcomes of all courses.

The following table provides an overview of the structure and assessment experiences provided within each of the English courses.

Table 1: Stage 6 English course requirements

Course	Structure		Assessment		
	Core	Options	School-based	HSC examination	Submitted work
English (Standard)	1	3	Y	Y	N
English (Advanced)	1	3	Y	Y	N
English Extension 1	–	3	Y	Y	N
English Extension 2	1	–	Y	N	Y
English as a Second Language	1	2	Y	Y	N
English Life Skills	–	6	Y	N	N
Fundamentals of English	1	4	Y	N	N
English Studies	1	3–4	Y	N	N

English (Standard) – 2 Unit Preliminary and HSC

English (Standard) provides opportunities for students to increase their expertise in English in order to enhance their personal, social and vocational lives. The students learn to respond to and compose a wide variety of texts in a range of situations in order to be effective, creative and confident communicators.

The English (Standard) and the English (Advanced) courses have a common Area of Study constituting 40% of each course, with the remaining 60% made up of modules unique to each course.

HSC examination requirements for English (Standard) include the study of four prescribed texts, plus related texts chosen by the student.

English (Advanced) – 2 Unit Preliminary and HSC

The English (Advanced) course emphasises the analysis and evaluation of texts and the ways they are valued in their contexts. It provides students with the opportunity for composing and responding to more complex texts and engaging in sustained higher-order thinking and reflection. The outcomes of the English (Advanced) course incorporate and extend beyond those of the English (Standard) course.

HSC examination requirements include the study of five prescribed texts including a Shakespearean drama, plus related texts chosen by the student.

English Extension 1 – 1 Unit Preliminary and HSC

Extension courses are designed for students who wish to pursue a specialised study of English. In the Preliminary Extension course students explore how and why texts are valued in particular contexts, and they develop skills in independent investigation and extended composition.

The HSC English Extension 1 course builds on the outcomes of the Preliminary course. Students undertake one of eight prescribed electives covering various genres, historical periods and language studies. Each elective involves intensive study of three prescribed texts and other related texts chosen by the student.

English Extension 2 – 1 Unit HSC

Students undertaking the English Extension 1 course have the option to also study English Extension 2. In this course, students develop a sustained composition (Major Work), documenting and reflecting on this process.

English (ESL) – 2 Unit Preliminary and HSC

The English (ESL) course may be studied by any student who has been educated overseas or in an Australian educational institution with English as the language of instruction for five years or less prior to commencing the Preliminary course. In this course, students acquire and develop their English language skills, knowledge and understanding through their exploration of texts.

HSC examination requirements include the study of three prescribed texts, plus related texts chosen by the student.

English Life Skills – 2 Unit Preliminary and HSC

Students enrolling in a Stage 6 Life Skills course will usually have completed Years 7–10 Life Skills outcomes and content in one or more courses. The Life Skills course provides greater flexibility for

teachers to select outcomes and content that meet students' individual learning needs, strengths, goals and interests.

The English Life Skills course is designed for the small percentage of students, particularly those with an intellectual disability, for whom adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment are not sufficient to access some or all of the regular English outcomes.

The Stage 6 English Life Skills course focuses on the development of communication and literacy skills that aim to promote independence and participation of students in all aspects of post-school life. The course covers six modules – communication, speaking, listening, reading, writing and viewing.

Fundamentals of English – 1 or 2 Unit Preliminary

Fundamentals of English is designed for students who would benefit from additional time and assistance to meet Stage 6 English outcomes. It is a skills-based course that can be tailored to meet students' literacy needs. The course can be studied in conjunction with either English (Standard) or English (ESL).

English Studies – 2 Unit Preliminary and HSC

English Studies is a non-ATAR course designed for students seeking an alternative to the English (Standard) course.

In this course, students explore aspects of texts in a variety of contexts. They respond to and compose texts, and synthesise the knowledge gained from a range of sources for a variety of purposes. The course does not have an HSC examination. Students' HSC results are determined solely by school-based assessments.

3.   Candidature

The following tables summarise candidature in each course within the English key learning area from 2009–2013.

Table 2: HSC candidature by English course 2009–2013

Course	2009			2010			2011			2012			2013		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
English (Standard)	17073	15381	**32454**	18155	16216	**34371**	17721	16663	**34384**	16315	15489	**31804**	15932	15564	**31496**
English (Advanced)	11355	15893	**27248**	11238	15894	**27132**	11252	15858	**27110**	11330	15887	**27217**	11375	15634	**27009**
English Extension 1	2084	3635	**5719**	1941	3637	**5578**	1843	3484	**5327**	1729	3536	**5265**	1673	3334	**5007**
English Extension 2	717	1450	**2167**	706	1496	**2202**	713	1474	**2187**	638	1491	**2129**	565	1342	**1907**
English as a Second Language	1571	1677	**3248**	1537	1542	**3079**	1447	1423	**2870**	1335	1178	**2513**	1201	1209	**2410**
English Life Skills	796	581	**1377**	871	615	**1486**	876	531	**1407**	789	522	**1311**	829	538	**1367**
English Studies*	–	–	–	–	–	–	784	444	**1228**	3069	1908	**4977**	3808	2425	**6233**

*First HSC candidature 201

M = Male   F = Female   T = Total

Table 3: Preliminary candidature by English course 2009–2013

Course	2009			2010			2011			2012			2013		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
English (Standard)	19512	16164	**35676**	19608	17060	**36668**	17762	15932	**33694**	17527	15928	**33455**	17323	16032	**33355**
English (Advanced)	13923	18819	**32742**	13695	18843	**32538**	13835	18672	**32507**	13746	18689	**32435**	13773	18173	**31946**
English Extension 1	3267	5259	**8526**	3154	5172	**8326**	3176	5305	**8481**	3127	5127	**8254**	3127	4836	**7963**
English as a Second Language	2111	1825	**3936**	1817	1712	**3529**	1639	1404	**3043**	1522	1386	**2908**	1363	1386	**2749**
English Life Skills	889	603	**1492**	939	546	**1485**	948	581	**1529**	998	603	**1601**	1181	578	**1759**
Fundamentals of English	2649	2503	**5152**	2262	2135	**4397**	1910	1739	**3649**	1675	1725	**3400**	1440	1486	**2926**
English Studies*	–	–	–	873	401	**1274**	3625	2020	**5645**	4231	2361	**6592**	4818	2672	**7490**

*First Preliminary candidature 2010

M = Male   F = Female   T = Total

Table 4: Number of students by system for HSC English courses 2009–2013

Course	2009			2010			2011			2012			2013		
	Gov	Ind	Syst	Gov	Ind	Syst	Gov	Ind	Syst	Gov	Ind	Syst	Gov	Ind	Syst
English (Standard)	19902	5674	6313	21268	5668	6797	21277	5518	7050	19211	5503	6618	18855	5253	6991
English (Advanced)	13959	8933	4105	14100	8731	4057	13878	9013	4045	13492	10564	2961	13378	9403	4076
English Extension 1	2783	2148	755	2721	2089	741	2699	1936	667	2506	2064	676	2426	1875	684
English Extension 2	1071	828	254	1134	794	259	1148	810	214	1042	851	224	951	709	237
English as a Second Language	1853	1329	58	2049	951	56	1995	817	43	1871	589	44	1869	496	43
English Life Skills	1183	91	103	1318	66	102	1225	77	105	1124	93	93	1186	95	86
English Studies*	–	–	–	–	–	–	865	104	235	3993	174	780	4893	204	1097

Gov = Government schools   *Ind* = Independent schools   *Syst* = Systemic schools

*First HSC candidature 2011

Table 5: Number of students by area for HSC English courses 2009–2013

Course	2009			2010			2011			2012			2013		
	Met	Reg	O'seas	Met	Reg	O'seas	Met	Reg	O'seas	Met	Reg	O'seas	Met	Reg	O'seas
English (Standard)	18862	13511	81	20048	14210	113	20122	14179	83	18824	12866	114	18949	12457	90
English (Advanced)	17958	9210	80	18043	9023	66	18075	8960	75	18528	8626	63	18677	8263	69
English Extension 1	4101	1597	21	4039	1526	13	3840	1476	11	3711	1541	13	3647	1345	15
English Extension 2	1432	724	11	1459	738	5	1457	726	4	1409	712	8	1293	609	5
English as a Second Language	2883	133	232	2761	125	193	2568	92	210	2257	92	164	2149	104	157
English Life Skills	713	664	–	757	729	–	748	659	–	739	572	–	739	628	–
English Studies*	–	–	–	–	–	–	503	725	–	2183	2787	7	2783	3440	10

Met = Schools in the Sydney metropolitan region   *Reg* = Schools in country areas of NSW   *O'seas* = Schools located outside Australia

*First HSC candidature 2011

Table 6: Retention of candidates from Preliminary to HSC English courses 2009–2013

Course	2008–09			2009–10			2010–11			2011–12			2012–13		
	Prelim	HSC	% Ret	Prelim	HSC	% Ret	Prelim	HSC	% Ret	Prelim	HSC	% Ret	Prelim	HSC	% Ret
English (Standard)	33378	32454	97.2	35676	34371	96.3	36668	34384	93.7	33694	31804	94.3	33455	31496	94.1
English (Advanced)	32540	27248	83.7	32742	27132	82.8	32538	27110	83.3	32507	27217	83.7	32435	27009	83.2
English Extension 1	8623	5719	66.3	8526	5578	65.4	8326	5327	63.9	8481	5265	62.0	8254	5007	60.6
English Extension 2	–	2167	N/A	–	2202	N/A	–	2187	N/A	–	2129	N/A	–	1907	N/A
English as a Second Language	4702	3248	69.0	3936	3079	78.2	3529	2870	81.3	3043	2513	82.5	2908	2410	82.8
English Life Skills	1385	1377	99.4	1492	1486	99.5	1485	1407	94.7	1529	1311	85.7	1601	1367	85.3
English Studies*	–	–	N/A	–	–	N/A	1274	1228	96.3	5645	4977	88.1	6592	6233	94.5

*First HSC candidature 2011

Examination of males and females undertaking senior secondary English courses reveals a significant gender difference in the English Extension courses, where the candidature is approximately two-thirds female. Male students in the English (Advanced) course are also consistently outnumbered by female students. English (Standard) has generally had a larger proportion of male students, although this gender gap has closed in recent years. This can perhaps be explained by the introduction of English Studies, another course in which male students outnumber females.

Candidature by system shows that non-government schools have a higher percentage of their students undertaking the English (Advanced), English Extension 1 and English Extension 2 course than government schools. Non-government schools have a lower percentage of students undertaking English (Standard), English Studies and English Life Skills, than government schools.

The number of students studying English (Advanced) for the HSC has remained fairly constant over the past five years as the overall candidature has risen. Hence, the percentage of the total candidature for this course has fallen slightly over this period. The number of students studying English (Standard) rose from 2009–2011 before declining in 2012 and 2013. The majority of these students are presumed to be studying English Studies instead, as its candidature has grown from 1228 in 2011 to 6233 in 2013.

Retention of students from the Preliminary to HSC course declines for both English (Advanced) and English (Standard). This may be explained in part by the number of students leaving school and the number of students transferring from English (Advanced) to English (Standard) and from English (Standard) to English Studies.

Over the past five years, there has been a decline in the number of students studying English ESL, English Extension 1 and English Extension 2.

The percentage of students enrolled in English Life Skills consistently remained at 2% of all HSC English courses from 2009 to 2013, with a 15% decline in the retention rate over the same period.

4.   NSW consultation on the senior secondary Australian curriculum

The BOSTES conducted consultation on the draft senior secondary Australian curriculum for English during June –July 2012. The NSW consultation consisted of metropolitan and regional face-to-face focus group meetings with teachers and key stakeholders, as well as an online survey. A range of submissions were also received from the NSW education sectors, professional associations and individuals. The *Senior Secondary English Consultation Report* can be accessed through the BOSTES website at <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/australian-curriculum/11-12-eng-maths-sci-hist.html>.

The 2012 consultation identified similar content as well as some differences between the senior secondary Australian curriculum for English and the senior secondary NSW English curriculum:

English

The Australian curriculum English course and the NSW English (Standard) course cover similar learning outcomes and content; however, the English (Standard) course offers more breadth and scope of content. In revising English (Standard), consideration will need to be made of the ways in which students' ability to reflect on their responding, composing and processes of learning can be fostered.

Literature

The basis for the learning presented in the Australian curriculum Literature course is similar to that of the NSW English (Advanced) course; however, the NSW course is more extensive, enriching and challenging for students. In revising the English (Advanced) course, it will be necessary to maintain outcomes and content that develop students as independent and creative thinkers as well as ensure the course continues to build capacity for the NSW English Extension courses.

English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D)

There are many similarities between the outcomes of the Australian curriculum EAL/D course and the outcomes of the NSW English (ESL) course. Similar English language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and the analysis and composition of texts are covered. There are, however, a number of significant differences. EAL/D is designed as a foreign language course and does not cater for students of high academic ability who might be acquiring English. The text-based, rather than language-based, framework of the NSW English (ESL) course will need to be maintained in order to provide opportunities for critical and conceptual thinking.

Maintaining an integrated, holistic view of English in the content of the NSW English (ESL) course is an essential consideration in the revision of the course. Research in the area of ESL pedagogy emphasises the importance of providing a meaningful context for language learning. Students learn language skills most effectively when the relationship between context, purpose and audience is clear.

Essential English

Both the Australian curriculum Essential English course and the NSW English Studies course offer a clear and explicit focus on the essential literacy needs of students and are grounded on the building of capacity and skills in this area. English Studies also builds literacy content into explicit, flexible and engaging contexts. This highlights for students the relevance of their learning to broader contexts than the classroom, emphasising 21st century skills such as collaboration and personal reflection to assist them in preparing for community, workplace and social contexts.

Consideration of the target audience for the NSW English Studies course will need to be made in any revisions of the course. English Studies supports students to build their literacy skills while also appealing to a broader range of students who, for various reasons, find it to be a suitable alternative to English (Standard).

The BOSTES provided advice to ACARA about the senior secondary Australian curriculum for English, including:

- The intent of the rationales of the senior secondary Australian curriculum English courses is not always represented in the content.
- The cognitive demand of the outcomes does not cater for the full range of students and requires further emphasis on the importance of reflection and metacognition.
- The content has a stronger functional emphasis without some of the aspects of contextualised learning found in the NSW curriculum.
- The courses require more emphasis on personal response and the development of creative and imaginative thinking.

In revising the senior secondary NSW curriculum for English, the advice to ACARA will be considered.

5. Literature review

5.1 ACARA literature review

The fundamental approach that informed the development of the Australian curriculum in English is set out in the document *National English Curriculum: Initial advice*, issued by the National Curriculum Board (now ACARA) in 2008.

This paper set the parameters within which the Australian curriculum in English has been designed, specifying language, literature and literacy as the three 'elements' of study. These elements are examined in the initial advice paper in terms of knowledge about English, informed appreciation of literature and a growing repertoire of English usage.

In preparing this initial advice, the National Curriculum Board consulted English curriculum documents from all Australian states and territories, as well as those of selected overseas jurisdictions: British Columbia, Ontario, California, Finland, Singapore, Hong Kong, England, South Africa, Ireland and Scotland. The paper also included a bibliography of some 40 items, chiefly dealing with aspects of literacy. There is little evidence that the paper drew upon literature in the broader field of the subject English.

The development process was overseen by an English Advisory Group consisting of academics and teachers, and the senior secondary Australian curriculum for English was reviewed by overseas experts and international curriculum authorities.

Following consultation on the *Initial advice* paper, the National Curriculum Board released the *National English Curriculum: Framing paper* which sought feedback on a structure based on the three 'elements' and included an expanded bibliography, again focused on literacy.

The document *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English*, released in May 2009, formalised the three elements of study – language, literature and literacy – as the curriculum strands. These strands represent key ideas in the history of the subject and could be said to reflect some international historical consensus. ACARA subsequently used these strands as an organising framework to create the F–10 Australian curriculum for English.

Most states and territories have existing English courses that align with the four senior secondary Australian curriculum English subjects, although the extent of alignment, the issues to be addressed and approaches to curriculum design, support and implementation reflect jurisdictional differences.

Some jurisdictions have additional English courses outside the scope of the Australian curriculum. Victoria, for example, has a linguistics-based course, 'English Language', which will be maintained, though it will undergo a minor review to ensure coherence across the Victorian suite of English offerings. Similarly, in New South Wales the English Extension 2 course will be retained, as it is valued for the opportunities it provides for highly able students of English to pursue more intensive and independent study.

5.2   NSW literature review

The current *Stage 6 English Syllabus* (1999) was developed on the best available evidence regarding the nature of English as a subject and leading-edge best practice.

As part of the development process, a comprehensive literature review was conducted and published in 1998. This included an annotated overview of some 40 key publications exploring current thinking on the subject of English, supported by a bibliography of around 100 other relevant items. The review also included an examination of senior English curriculums in other Australian jurisdictions, as well as English curriculums in New Zealand, Scotland, Canada, South Africa, Singapore, the United States, England and Wales.

In addition, Professor Roslyn Arnold from the University of Sydney was commissioned to prepare a review of national and international research in English as a discipline and in English education over the previous five years. Literature was examined on current perspectives of the subject, including discussion of various applications of these perspectives, the implications of changing technology for pedagogy, the learning needs of specific student populations and the relationship between English and the workplace. The research clearly acknowledged the diverse strands of the subject English and its dynamic nature.

Also in 1998, the BOSTES conducted a two-day forum of key stakeholders to consider various perspectives on the study of English. Forum participants acknowledged that views on the study of English and the nature of the subject varied, and that it was difficult to encapsulate the variety of contemporary perspectives. However, the most significant perspectives considered were as follows:
- Cultural heritage – promoting the transmission of the established view of high culture; valuing the literature of the western canon; cultivating aesthetic appreciation; detailed analytical treatment of texts.
- Personal growth – highlighting the role of English in a student's language development and the role played by language use in a student's identity. Personal experience is regarded as a central element of English, along with the development of students' personal responses to texts. Over time, other aspects of English that were seen to arise from a 'growth' model (with more or less validity) included: individual creativity, the role of literature in developing imaginative and aesthetic lives promoting ' whole language' learning and a 'process' approach to writing.
- Cultural analysis approaches – includes cultural literacy/history and cultural studies that tries to broaden the texts with which such analysis deals. A 'Cultural Studies' model examines a range

of cultural products (written, spoken and multimedia) including traditional literature to inform our knowledge of a culture.
- Literacy development – emphasis on developing skills for everyday functioning in social contexts, as well as the development of higher-order skills and composing and responding skills across modes and media. The argument is often made that developing literacy is contingent upon particular kinds of conscious knowledge about language.

Critical literacy was the dominant paradigm of the subject in terms of curriculum discussion in Australia during the 1990s. Critical literacy aims to develop knowledge about how language is used to position readers and writers in social and cultural contexts. Important Australian work (Misson & Morgan 2006) has aimed at bringing together critical literacy with an aesthetically-oriented position on English curriculum.

The current *Stage 6 English Syllabus* is underpinned by the extensive research and consultation that occurred during its development phase, as described above. Different theoretical positions can find their place within the syllabus and no single model of English curriculum predominates. The syllabus design enables teachers to draw on the methods of different theoretical perspectives and models for teaching English, to help students to achieve the syllabus outcomes at the highest levels.

A similar approach was adopted for the revision of the *Years 7–10 English Syllabus* in 2003. The significance of student agency, the notion of the student as a user of language, playing an active role in constructing meaning and having prior knowledge and interacting with others remained central. Research commissioned by the BOSTES in 2000 undertaken by Sawyer and McFarlane identified that the most significant considerations that should underpin the 7–10 syllabus design were:
- technological and multimodal literacy incorporating opportunities for composing and responding to a range of texts using new technologies
- a broad view of what constitutes visual text and a wide definition of 'text'
- the importance of communal and collaborative learning as well as independent learning and reflection
- balance given to responding and composing as well as to the imaginative and critical, the latter involving analysis and critique
- the relationship between English and literacy education
- the relationship between English and the workplace.

5.3   Recent significant developments and practices in English
Over the past two to three decades, researchers in the field of English curriculum have continued to explore the areas and issues noted above. Recent developments in the literature are canvassed below. These developments build on, rather than challenge, the fundamental ideas underpinning the current *Stage 6 English Syllabus*. Most recently, this work has informed the development of the NSW *English K–10 Syllabus*.

Multimodal/multimedia literacy

To be fully literate in the contemporary world entails being literate with respect to print, spoken, multimedia and multimodal forms, and having the capacity to be able to create and analyse these

texts at a high level. Multimodal/media materials often have a variety of texts embedded within them, requiring students to consider multiple text structures and contexts simultaneously. Evidence-based research has continued to confirm this area as significant for students in the 21st century. Alvermann et al (2012) suggest that young people's web literacy is intertwined with literacies used in schools and has relevance for living and working in the 21st century.

The impact of new technologies on pedagogy and its role in instructional methods for improving literacy feature prominently in recent research. Areas include:

- effectiveness of computer-based strategies for improving comprehension
- effects of technology immersion on high school students
- use of online discussion boards and their benefits in secondary English classrooms
- analysis of adolescents' use of online search strategies to acquire information
- use of ICT in literacy education
- digital storytelling in a virtual learning environment.

Heinrich (2012) examined students' and teachers' uses of iPads in a British school and found them to have a positive influence on classroom learning. The most frequent uses as reported by students were: online research, mind-mapping, presentations, video production and reading materials. Research indicated that the use of iPads had a positive impact on students' motivation to learn.

There is evidence to suggest that learning in virtual worlds offers open-ended environments that promote different kinds of interaction and imagination conducive to writing (Xu 2011) and that digital story-telling enhances students' content understanding and critical thinking (Yang 2012).

Metacognition

Since 1999, further research has continued to confirm the role of metacognition as an essential key to successful learning by helping students to understand and monitor their own learning processes. International jurisdictions such as Alberta and British Columbia have incorporated metacognition into all aspects of their curriculum. Research shows that students with high metacognition –students who understand how they learn – learn more efficiently, are more adept at transferring what they know to other situations and are more autonomous than students who have little awareness of how they learn (Bransford, Brown & Cocking 2000). Metacognitive knowledge has been found to have a significant effect on student learning and achievement (Daniels & Bizar 2005; Graham & Perin 2007).

The role of metacognition has been found to assist students to gain control over the strategies they use when engaged in literacy activities. Pressley (2002) has found students who use metacognitive skills to monitor their learning, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for improvement become independent, lifelong learners.

Cultural identity

The link between the study of language and culture and cultural identity has continued to interest researchers. The importance of a pedagogy that affirms the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners and its importance in pedagogical models of English teaching is evident in the research.

Literacy

Literacy knowledge and skills that provide students with the foundations for current and future learning and for participation in the workplace and wider society continue to remain the focus of considerable research. An important model of literacy originating from Australia in the late 1980s, but of enduring interest and importance, is the 3-D model/framework which conceptualises literacy in terms of three dimensions: operational, cultural, critical (Green & Beavis 2012). The 'operational' dimension focuses on the language aspects of literacy and is concerned with people's ability to read and write appropriately and adequately in a range of contexts. The cultural dimension is meaning-focused and concerned with the idea of being literate 'with regard to something' (Green 2012, p 5), in particular school subjects. The 'critical' dimension focuses on the social construction of knowledge, enabling individuals to reflect critically on what is being learnt and not simply to participate in the culture but also to transform it and produce it.

Reading through 'making' literature

Since the 1970s, imaginative re-creation has been mainstream practice in the teaching of literature in the junior secondary years of schooling (Years 7–10). Stratta, Dixon and Wilkinson coined the term 'imaginative re-creation' in 1973 to refer to students having 'a creative role in relation to the work of fiction' in order to 'imaginatively re–create (for themselves) the experience of the novelist ' (Stratta et al 1973, p 70). Their examples of such work included: changing the narrative viewpoint of an episode in a novel; creating a radio adaptation of part of a novel; re–writing an episode in another context (eg for a modern audience); creating television or film versions of some episodes; translating a section of a novel into drama (1973, pp 70–86). Such work was also part of Reid's (1984) well-known 'Workshop' model of English. Recently, McCallum (2012, pp 56–73) has argued for the importance of *re*-creation in the 'creative' activities of the English classroom and Adams (2013) has revised his important Australian text focused on such work at the junior secondary level, and known as 'dependent authorship'. These activities are variously theorised as 'experiments in artifice' (Reid 1984, p 27) and exercises in the 'transformative nature of learning' (McCallum 2012, p 54), with benefits for cognition and the imagination in work on literature (Adams). It is arguments such as these that have also given a place to the notion of (digital) 'remixing' in contemporary cultural practice, and therefore in classrooms (Knobel & Lankshear 2008; Dezuanni & Jetnikoff 2008; Dezuanni 2011; Association for Media Literacy, nd).

However, in the last 20 years a number of important writers on English at the tertiary level have also been theorising about the connections between writing and reading in responding to literature. This theorising – perhaps even more so than the equivalent work in junior secondary school – has implications for English as studied in the senior school (Years 11–12). This work has issued from a number of theoretical and pedagogical positions on literature. Pope (1995) has written about reading texts as a form of re-writing, and acts of intervention as acts of interpretation. His argument is that the re-writing and reading entailed in such textual interventions as, for example, changing the point of view of a poem like Browning's *My last duchess* to those of the envoy, the gardener or Fra Pandolf (1995, 14ff) are 'the best way to understand how a text works'. Partly, then, such work is about creating better readers. Similarly, one key part of Scholes' more general argument for the importance of writing as a central concern of tertiary level English is that 'students would be better readers of literature because of their attempts to write it' (1998, p 162). Knights and Thurgar-

Dawson also see the importance of re-creation ('active reading') in the linking of the critical and the creative, but, additionally, in its shifting the pedagogy of tertiary level English in order to allow the subject to flourish in contemporary culture: 'the refreshment of the subject is … as likely to be generated not simply, or even at all, from the scholarly generation of knowledge, but from the reinvigoration of the transactions between student, teacher and text' (2006, p 35).

6.   Discussion on the proposed revisions to NSW senior secondary English courses

Given that the current suite of NSW senior secondary English courses reflects appropriate rigour, equity and differentiation for students, it is proposed that these courses be maintained with revisions to course content and assessment practices. Electives and texts for English courses will continue to be elaborated in a separate support document revised at regular intervals.

The model applied to all Australian curriculum subjects is linear, with outcomes tied to particular, discrete units rather than the recursive model of NSW where outcomes are achieved over time. The revisions will maintain the current NSW recursive model.

The NSW courses place more emphasis on developing students' ability to be learners who reflect on their responding, composing and processes of learning. These opportunities for reflection and higher order thinking will be maintained.

Other key theoretical underpinnings and strengths of the current NSW courses to be retained are:

- the central focus on making meaning through responding to and composing texts
- the comprehensive definition of 'texts'
- the valuing of both creative and critical approaches
- the six language modes of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and representing
- literature as an entitlement for the full range of students.

The revised syllabuses will make more explicit key aspects of literacy necessary for students to be able to use language effectively, appropriately and accurately.

7.   K–12 learning continuum

The study of senior secondary English is an important phase in the development of students' knowledge, understanding, skills, and values and attitudes of and about the English language. This development may begin before formal schooling and continue well beyond the HSC years. English is the mandatory subject throughout K–12 education in New South Wales.

Stages 1–3

In Stages 1–3, students engage in English learning experiences to develop their abilities to speak, listen, read, view and write with purpose, effect and confidence. These experiences are initiated in and developed through the study of texts. Students are introduced to a range of texts and begin to develop the skills to discuss and analyse texts.

Students observe how language involves choices and consider how these choices can shape meaning according to context. They are introduced to a range of children's literature, and they begin to engage with the language structures and grammar of Standard Australian English. They respond to and compose a range of texts and develop enjoyment, confidence and independence in learning and in using spoken and written language.

Stages 4–5

As they move into secondary years, students enter into a more specialised study of English. They engage with a wider and more challenging range of texts and develop a formal language repertoire for an increasing range of purposes, audiences and situations. They are able to engage in close textual analysis and reflect on the purposes and effects of conventions in texts.

Students begin to extend their interpretations of texts, develop more complex reasoning and justify arguments with substantial evidence from text and context. They further explore language choices, such as register, and complex textual features such as irony, metaphor and experimentation with textual conventions. Students compare and contrast texts. They consider the effects of various contexts on the ways that people respond to and compose texts.

In Stages 4–5, students enjoy and appreciate their own and others' use of written, oral and visual language. They develop skills in responding to and composing a wide range of media in a sensitive and critical way and they begin to consider the ethical and sociopolitical implications of texts.

Stage 6

By Stage 6, students are developing or have developed an understanding of themselves and the ways that they relate to learning and the value of learning in their lives. They bring to their learning a range of perspectives and experiences. Students' choices of study are broadened to recognise their growing independence as learners and the diversity of their needs, interests, abilities, goals, pathways and intentions. Study in English at Stage 6 is characterised by students' increased awareness of the ways in which they organise and participate in learning, and by greater self-direction.

At Stage 6, students are more specific and articulate in their study of how meanings are shaped in and through texts. They refine their imaginative and interpretive skills and apply their analytical abilities to increasingly complex texts. They develop knowledge and understanding of the ways that the linguistic, structural, contextual and thematic interrelationships among texts shape meaning. They develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the role and function of literary conventions and devices. Students analyse the relationships between texts and technologies of production, and evaluate the ways in which the medium itself influences the shape and nature of meaning. Their skills in composition are further developed.

8.   Teaching standards and teacher education

The BOSTES supports quality teaching in all NSW schools. A minimum standard of teacher quality applies uniformly throughout the country in order to ensure rural and socially disadvantaged

communities a level of teacher quality comparable to that available to students in advantaged metropolitan locations.

The BOSTES oversees a system of accreditation and recognition of a teacher's professional capacity against professional standards. Part of these responsibilities is to approve initial and continuing teacher education courses and programs.

Currently, there are 76 accredited secondary initial teacher education programs in New South Wales delivered through 17 institutions. Of these, 31 initial teacher education courses allow graduates to qualify to teach within the English key learning area in a secondary context. Alternative pathways also exist to postgraduate teacher education courses.

9.   References

Adams, P 2013, *At the far reach of their capacities: Responding to literature through writing literature*, Phoenix Education, Putney.

Alvermann, DE, Marshall, JD, McLean, CA, Huddleston, AP, Joaquin, J & Bishop, J 2012, 'Adolescents' web-based literacies, identity construction, and skill development', *Literacy Research & Instruction*, vol 51, no. 3, pp 179–195.

Association for Media Literacy (nd), available at: <www.aml.ca/aboutus/>.

Board of Studies NSW, 1998, *Stage 6 English Literature Review*, Board of Studies NSW, Sydney.

Bransford, J, Brown, A & Cocking, R (eds) 2000, *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience and school*, National Academies Press, Washington, DC.

Daniels, H & Bizar, M 2005, *Teaching the best practice way: Methods that matter, K–12*, Stenhouse Publishers, Portland, Maine.

Dezuanni, M 2011, 'Remixing media literacy education: Students "writing" with new media technologies', *Journal of Media Literacy*, vol 56, nos 1 and 2, available at: <http://journalofmedialiteracy.org/index.php/past-issues/5-school-20/101-remixing-media-literacy-education-students-writing-with-new-media-technologies>.

Dezuanni, M & Jetnikoff, A 2008, *Media remix: Digital projects for students*, John Wiley & Sons, Milton, Qld.

Graham, S & Perin, D 2007, *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high school – A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*, Alliance for Excellent Education, Washington, DC.

Green, B 2012, 'Subject-specific literacy and school learning: A revised account', in B Green and C Beavis (eds), *Literacy in 3-D: an integrated perspective in theory and practice*, ACER Press, Camberwell, pp 2–21.

Green, B & Beavis, C (eds) 2012, *Literacy in 3-D: an integrated perspective in theory and practice*, ACER Press, Camberwell.

Heinrich, P 2012, *The ipad as a tool for education: A study of the introduction of iPads at Longfield Academy, Kent*, NAACE, Nottingham, UK, retrieved from <www.naace.co.uk/publications/longfieldipadresearch>.

Knights, B & Thurgar-Dawson, C 2006, *Active reading: Transformative writing in literary studies*, Continuum, London.

Knobel, M & Lankshear, C 2008, 'Remix: The art and craft of endless hybridization', *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, vol 52, no. 1, September, pp 22–33.

McCallum, A 2012, *Creativity and learning in secondary English: Teaching for a creative classroom*, Routledge, London.

Misson, R & Morgan, W 2006, *Critical literacy and the aesthetic: Transforming the English classroom*, NCTE, Urbana, Ill.

National Curriculum Board 2008a, *National English Curriculum: Initial advice*.

—— 2008b, *National English Curriculum: Framing paper*.

—— 2009, *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English*, retrieved from <www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Australian_Curriculum_-_English.pdf>.

Pope, R 1995, *Textual interventions: Critical and creative strategies for literary studies*, Routledge, London.

Pressley, M 2002, *Metacognition and self-regulated comprehension*, in A Farstrup and J Samuels (eds), *What research has to say about reading instruction*, International Reading Association, Newark, DE, pp. 291–309.

Reid, I 1984, *The making of literature: Texts, contexts and classroom practices*, AATE, Adelaide.

Sawyer, W & McFarlane, K 2000, *Reviewing English in Years 7–10: A report for the Board of Studies, NSW 2000*.

Scholes, R 1998, *The rise and fall of English: Reconstructing English as a discipline*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, p 162.

Stratta, L, Dixon, J & Wilkinson, A 1973, *Patterns of language*, Heinemann Education, London.

Xu, Y, Park, H & Baek, Y 2011, 'A new approach toward digital storytelling: An activity focused on writing self-efficacy in a virtual learning environment', *Journal of Educational Technology and Society*, vol 14, no. 4, pp 181–191.

Yang, YTC 2012, 'Digital storytelling for enhancing student academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation: A year-long experimental study', *Computers & Education*, vol 59, no. 2, pp 339–352.