NSW Response

Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies
Years 9–10

Introduction
The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is managing the development of the Australian curriculum. ACARA released the draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Years 9–10 in December 2012.

The Board of Studies NSW is working with the education sectors in NSW to support ACARA in this initiative to provide input and feedback on the development of the curriculum. This report is the NSW response to ACARA regarding the draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Years 9–10.

The Board of Studies NSW consultation included:

- meetings and teleconferences with interested educators in the following regions:
  - Hunter/Central Coast (Morisset) on 21 March 2013
  - Western Sydney (Cranebrook) on 22 March 2013
  - North Western Sydney (Quakers Hill) on 22 March 2013
- a Work Studies Years 9–10 Reference Group consultation meeting comprising systems, sector and Careers Education representatives along with specialist teachers of Years 7–10 Work Education and Years 11–12 Work Studies on 11 March 2013
- an online survey on the Board of Studies website, available until 28 March 2013
- a meeting with the Board’s Vocational Education and Training Advisory Committee (VETAC)
- a response from the NSW Department of Education and Communities.

Summary of key points
The Board’s consultation meetings, online survey and written submissions indicated that while many of the sentiments are attractive and laudable the draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Years 9–10 does not provide a coherent basis for developing the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies Years 9–10 curriculum.

The draft Shape Paper makes reference to broad learning goals for all students, but it does not provide the structure to obtain these goals. While proposing to meet these broad goals the
Draft Shape Paper provides a curriculum designed more for those students wishing to exit school and move into further training, the workforce or vocational options post Year 10. Consultation feedback highlighted key issues and comments that require further review. These issues and comments are outlined below.

- The broad intent was supported but questions were asked about the value this course would add to our current offerings. Current NSW curriculum is already catering for the development of these skills and attributes.
- Questions were raised as to how to position the curriculum as a program that young people would aspire to participate in. It was reported by many that it should not be used as a retention and engagement strategy for disengaged youth. It may present an opportunity to offer a new, prestigious, high-quality credentialled curriculum option.
- There was overlap identified with the current Years 7–10 NSW syllabuses. The inclusion of ‘Work Employment and Enterprise’ and the ‘Work and Enterprise’ across the curriculum content in all NSW syllabuses was highlighted as the source of duplication.
- The concepts of applied learning and ‘learning by doing’ were regarded positively.
- The paper provides minimal guidance in regard to career pathways and no mention is made of the role of parents and school Career Advisers.
- The links to other curriculum areas are superficial and overlook, for example, ACARA’s Technologies curriculum presently under development.
- There was overwhelming support for not mandating work placements.
- There is a need for more specificity throughout the draft Shape Paper to assist the design of a focused curriculum.
- The draft Shape Paper would benefit by providing guidance about relevant current resources such as the National Career Information Website, myfuture: <http://www.myfuture.edu.au> and <www.enterpriselearning.nsw.edu.au>
- The Cross-Curriculum Priorities section closely reflects other ACARA documents. It was recommended that this section be expanded with specific reference to this proposed curriculum.
- The two ‘foundations’ in the Organisation section of the document ie Understanding Self and Understanding Work are clearly delineated in the draft Shape Paper as are the two strands: Skills for Learning and Work and the World of Work. This was seen as a strength.
- The draft Shape Paper provided no mention of transition to work avenues such as volunteering, part-time or casual work that may lead to full-time employment.
- Much of the directions reflect what is currently being addressed by NSW schools offering careers education, Work Education 7–10 and Stage 6 Work Studies. It was suggested that the shape paper may assist with future revision of these syllabuses rather than rethinking the courses to be offered.

Consideration of the diverse learning needs of students

The draft Shape Paper states that the proposed course will ‘be of benefit for all students’. It was reported that this was not clearly addressed throughout the paper and the focus narrowed towards catering for those seeking vocational qualifications or to exit school for employment. It was recommended that to remain attractive and beneficial to the diverse range of students the draft Shape Paper should provide greater guidance in regard to:
the development of students’ literacy and numeracy skills at all ability levels
- advice about activities that promote self-management and self-direction
- the characteristics and development of entrepreneurial and creative skills
- the diversity of learners from language backgrounds other than English
- the relevance of the curriculum to teachers and coordinators of programs for gifted and talented students
- the inclusion of resources that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples history and culture.

The suggested priority of project-based learning and ‘learning by doing’ was well regarded. However, clear advice was requested to implement these strategies given the diversity of learners and the impact on schools.

Specific comments relating to sections of the draft

Preface (para 1–3)
The preface of the draft Shape Paper provides broad goal statements which were supported but a clear reasoning for embarking on the development of a Work Studies Years 9–10 curriculum was not evident. Feedback suggested that the Preface and Background be collapsed into one Introductory Statement.

Background (para 4–6)
The background provided information that suggests the curriculum was originally targeted at those students pursuing trade careers or vocational qualifications and that the focus was broadened to encapsulate the global goals of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.

Consultation feedback recommended that these goals be addressed within the General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities sections of the draft Shape Paper.

Feedback also indicated that this change to the original intent of the curriculum is problematic as it raises questions in regard to the target audience of the curriculum and the specific outcomes desired of the learning.

It was suggested that the title Work Studies created a perception of a course for early leavers. A change of title could be considered.

Rationale (para 7–16)
The Rationale outlined very broad statements of intent with which most would agree. However, it did not provide guidance on the benefits offered by a Work Studies Years 9–10 curriculum that would enhance the existing suite of curriculum offerings.

It was reported that the Rationale emphasises an extrinsically motivated philosophy of education where the outcome is to produce ‘product oriented’ students who value learning to obtain continuous employment. While mentioning ‘the general capabilities for lifelong learning’ these are specifically linked to work. The Rationale omits the philosophy of education that promotes an intrinsic love of learning for its own sake and not solely for extrinsic motivators such as employment and/or active citizenship.
Consultation feedback also suggested that the terms ‘entrepreneurial’, ‘enterprise learning’ and ‘enterprising learning’ be differentiated and that the work of Paul Kearney (a renowned expert in the field of enterprise learning) be integrated.

Aims (para 17–18)
The focus on developing students who are self-managing and self-directed and can recognise and adapt to a changing work environment by applying their personal, ICT and communication skills is supported. However, the Aims statements fail to address the broader goals outlined in the Rationale. Further, links to ACARA’s General Capabilities seem artificial.

Consultation feedback suggested that the Aims were limited and lose the significance of the Rationale. They do not provide advice to teachers about the students the course is designed for and seem to assume that no other courses are providing students with this type of learning.

It is recommended that consideration may be given to adding ‘student-led learning’/student voice to ensure that the entrepreneurial skills and dispositions students are developing are embedded in how they engage with this curriculum.

Nature of the Work Studies Years 9–10 Curriculum (para 19–26)
This section of the draft Shape Paper restates many of the themes introduced in the Rationale but does not provide a solid structure to the course. Stakeholders indicated this section was wordy and introduced the concept that product-oriented learning will be a central characteristic of the course without explain how it would be addressed.

It is recommended that more specific information be provided to clarify the nature of the course. There is little to distinguish the course from existing offerings.

Nature of the Work Studies Years 9–10 Curriculum Applied Learning (para 27–32)
The feedback was positive in regard to the flexibility this section introduces in exposing students to the contexts of workplaces and enterprises rather than mandating arrangements such as compulsory work placements.

The inclusion of an explicit focus on General Capabilities, generic work skills, work exposure, applied learning, entrepreneurial behaviours and product-oriented learning were supported.

Organisation (para 33–36)
Feedback was positive in relation to the emphasis on applied learning and the link between ‘learning and doing’.

Respondents also indicated that the organisation is clearly about learning ‘for work in applied ways’. This continued narrowing of the direction of the draft Shape Paper compared to broad sentiments outlined in the Rationale, the Aims and the Nature of the Work Studies Years 9–10 Curriculum sections was noted. This narrowing is evidenced by the section’s concluding statement; ie ‘The curriculum will foreground learning for work and the link between learning and work.’

It is recommended that the course structure and organisation be based on and reflect the reasons why this course would be offered by schools as an elective reflecting the needs and
interests of a wide range of students. To accomplish this, a staged or core and modular approach is suggested to cater for the wide range of student abilities within and across schools.

Consultation feedback also recommended that *Links to other areas of the curriculum* (para 124–130) be emphasised in this section on organisation.

**Structure (para 37–40)**

Consultation feedback was generally positive and indicated that the course structure benefits from consistency with the current ACARA offerings in regard to content descriptions, content elaborations and achievement standards.

Feedback indicated that the structure of the course remained unclear in regard to integrating the General Capabilities and the draft *Core Skills for Work Framework*. It was reported that the diagram accompanying this section was vague and that more specific information was needed regarding the course structure.

It was recommended that a mandatory core and elective structure be included along with additional diagrams to provide further clarity about the sub-strands.

Respondents also indicated that the introduction of the term ‘work exposure’ was not desirable.

**Structure / Skills for Work and Earning**

*Work communication (para 42–46)*

The intent of this section is supported but more guidance is needed on how these aspirational skills will be structured, developed or achieved.

It was recommended to review this section to address the contents of the General Capabilities.

*Entrepreneurial behaviours (para 47–48)*

This section was well received by stakeholders.

It was recommended that the term ‘entrepreneurial’ be further explained and information provided as to why entrepreneurial behaviours matter at both the macro level and for individuals. It was also recommended that clarification was needed with regards to whether *Wide ranging global awareness and the capacity to participate actively in global communities* is to be included in the strands and/or sub-strands.

Feedback indicated that *Working with others* be removed from this section to become the first of the now three *Skills for Learning and Work*: *Working with others, Workplace communication* and *Entrepreneurial behaviours*. This ensures that the essential skill of interpersonal communication is emphasised ahead of other forms of workplace communication and that skills that underpin *Entrepreneurial behaviours* are clearly enunciated.

*Managing self (para 49)*

The heading being in Italics was assumed to be a typographical error.

It was recommended that guidance be provided to illustrate how self-management is to be taught. The idea that self-management could be located in this one section of the course was regarded as undesirable.
Planning and implementing tasks (para 50–52)
This section of the course clearly indicates that project-based learning will be prominent in the course. Consultation feedback regarded this as a beneficial requirement; however, questions arose around who would teach this course and what resourcing impacts would/could this requirement have.

Clarifying problems and proposing solutions (para 53–55)
This section was regarded as clear and important. There was a suggestion from one stakeholder that it could be included in the Entrepreneurial behaviours section.

Making decisions (para 56)
While regarded as extremely important, stakeholders requested some clarity on the different decision-making processes alluded to in this section.

Working with others (para 57–61)
This section was well received by stakeholders. The information provided in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples could be further expanded.

Structure / The World of Work (para 62)
This section was understood to reveal the central tenant of this curriculum: careers education and gaining and keeping work.

Consultation feedback indicated the obvious overlap with existing career education programs.

Career development (para 63–68)
Consultation feedback was broadly supportive of this section. It was identified that these areas are presently addressed by schools with careers education, Work Education 7–10 and Stage 6 Work Studies. It was suggested that the Shape Paper may assist with a future revision of these syllabuses.

It was further recommended that the role of parents and family in student career development be incorporated and that student self-knowledge be emphasised and that paragraph 68 be brought to the fore.

Gaining and keeping work and the nature of work (para 69–76)
This section was well received. There was advice that the definition of ‘work’ be expanded to include part-time, casual and volunteer work. It was indicated that full-time work often flowed from these.

Feedback suggested the sub-strand title be rearranged to be, The nature of work and gaining and keeping work. Stakeholders argued that the area of career pathways was treated minimally in this section (72) and that this important area required expansion.

It was also recommended that a paragraph be added which focuses on the importance of recognising and building on the experiences and knowledge of the world of work that students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds bring to the learning and work environment.

Work Exposure (para 77–83)
Consultation feedback indicated support for this section of the draft Shape Paper and agreed that work placement should not be a mandatory part of the course. It was also reported that the reference to ‘roles rights and responsibilities of employees’ requires enhancement.
Feedback recommended that direct references to Anti-discrimination and related Workplace Legislation be included in the curriculum as was the consideration of the impact on schools in regard to resourcing and the organisation of work exposure.

It is further recommended that the term ‘Work Exposure’ be reconsidered and that the term ‘work placement’ be replaced by ‘workplace learning’. Work Placement in NSW refers to mandatory industry placement for HSC VET courses undertaken by over 60,000 students.

Inclusive Practices (para 84–94)
Consultation feedback indicated support for the inclusion of these statements.

Student Diversity (para 84–86)
It was recommended that ACARA revise the underpinning document, Student Diversity and the Australian Curriculum that supports this section, as it does not reflect the complexity of students from language backgrounds other than English. It is reported to be framed using disability pedagogy which is not applicable to EAL/D learners or gifted and talented students; lacks balance across the diverse learners; contains inaccuracies and unrealistic strategies given that EAL/D learners make up 20% of the total student population and up to 99% in some schools.

Students with Disabilities (para 87–89)
Given the broad scope of students who may benefit from this curriculum it was recommended that specific examples of how the learning and support needs of all students would be met as there is a strong emphasis in the document on higher-order skill development.

Gifted and Talented Students (para 90–91)
It was indicated that gifted and talented students could benefit from the content of this curriculum. It was recommended to strengthen the appeal of the curriculum to teachers and coordinators of programs for gifted and talented students (and their parents) by emphasising how this curriculum equips students with a deeper understanding of the range of 21st century skills that will be demanded in the future.

General Capabilities (para 95–112)
Stakeholders indicated the importance and the centrality of the General Capabilities to the Work Studies Years 9–10 curriculum and indicated that they should be brought to the foreground of the document. There is no reference to General Capabilities as a whole in the descriptions of the strands and sub-strands and only Literacy, Numeracy and ICT Capabilities are specifically mentioned. The General Capabilities could be included in the diagram of the structure of the curriculum on page 11.

It was reported that the statements within the draft Shape Paper are regarded as generic and are written in a passive mode.

The following summarises feedback in regard to the General Capabilities:

- Ensure Numeracy is thoroughly addressed and included in the strand Skills for Learning and Work. It warrants being made a sub-strand.
- Critical and Creative Thinking General Capability was central to this curriculum and needed strengthening.
- Ensure that financial literacy has a presence in the paper and that it is made explicit in the Skills for Learning and Work strand.
• Make explicit how the ICT Capability is developed through this curriculum, for example, through the Skills for Learning and Work strand.
• Personal and Social Capability be made explicit and strengthened.
• A focus on the development of students’ own ethical understanding in a range of workplace and community contexts.
• That the General Capability of Intercultural Understanding be made explicit earlier in the Shape Paper. It is expected that this general capability feature in the Skills for learning and work strand and in the World of work strand.

Cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian Curriculum (para 113–123)

Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia
It was reported that the use of the word ‘power’ in paragraph 118 may be viewed as controversial and that consideration be given to the inclusion of Asia skills to support the teaching of this priority area.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
Feedback provided suggested that teachers of this course would benefit from specific advice about the learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

To enrich the inclusion of this priority in the Work Studies curriculum, several resources are suggested for consideration:

  - R. McCormick, N. Amundson & G. Poehnell, Guiding Circles An Aboriginal guide to finding career paths, Ergon Press
  - P-Plate program – Australian Employment Covenant (AEC)
  - Deadly Bay: Open for Work. CD-ROM.

Links to other areas of the curriculum (para 124–130)
The consultation feedback indicated that the links suggested to other areas of the curriculum were cursory and tenuous. It was highlighted that there were no links to ACARA’s Technologies curriculum nor Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses.

It is recommended that this section be expanded upon and other opportunities for linkages explored.

Senior Secondary Years (para 131–134)
The consultation feedback indicated that the pathway indicated for Senior Secondary students included ‘industry-endorsed vocational learning options’ only.

It was recommended that the mandated structured work placement suggested in this section be re-examined due to the present pressures upon industry to provide sufficient opportunities to meet the needs of vocational education students.

Glossary (para 137–154)
The definitions provided are considered adequate in scope and clarity.
It is recommended that the term ‘work’ include part-time and casual work as well as the addition of terms such as applied learning, creativity, enterprising, entrepreneurial, innovation and transition.

**Conclusion**

The draft Shape Paper states that the proposed course will be ‘of benefit for all students’. Consultation feedback indicated that the paper was generally well received especially its strong focus on the individual student and their developing self-awareness, the development of their interpersonal skills, the inclusion of career development for all, the promise of new understandings of employability skills through the draft *Core Skills for Work Framework* and the inclusion of enterprise skills with a strong focus on ICT and project-based learning. The feedback did however question the capacity of the draft Shape Paper to be translated into a curriculum that can achieve these goals.

Consultation feedback also indicated that the audience for the curriculum needed to be refined and clearly identified as the draft Shape Paper was trying to be ‘all things to all people’. In this regard the draft Shape Paper commences with aspirational statements for all students but narrows as it develops to promoting work-related knowledge and skills to assist a particular cohort of students move into employment or vocational options.

There were however suggestions for the courses future direction. It was proposed by Careers Advisers that the Work Studies Years 9–10 curriculum be written as a guidance paper to inform formal careers education or to enhance the current NSW Years 7–10 Work Education syllabus and/or the Stage 6 Work Studies syllabus.

It was also suggested that, to be accessible to the full range of students, the draft Shape Paper be revised to target the differing groupings within and across schools by introducing a staged design or core and options structure for the curriculum.

In conclusion, consultation feedback indicated that the overall benefit of the curriculum for students within NSW is questionable given the broad scope of learning opportunities students currently access in the suite of syllabuses currently available. Feedback consistently questioned the place and need for such a course in its current form, as many believed that teachers already covered this material in existing NSW course offerings.