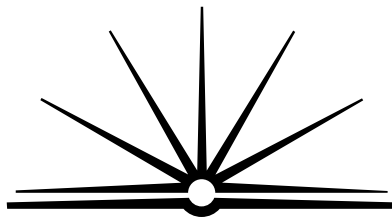


# **STATEMENT OF EQUITY PRINCIPLES**



**BOARD OF STUDIES**  
NEW SOUTH WALES

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# Statement of Equity Principles

This Statement of Equity Principles provides a guide to writers of syllabuses, support materials and assessment guidelines in developing materials which relate to two of the Board's corporate objectives:

- ◆ to develop high quality courses and support materials for primary and secondary education suited to the needs of the full range of students;
- ◆ to assess student achievement and award credentials of international standards to meet the needs of the full range of students.

The Statement of Equity Principles is derived from the Board's Statement of Values (pp 2–3) which was endorsed by the Board in 1994. The Statement of Equity Principles serves to elucidate the Statement of Values from an equity perspective.

Underpinning the Statement of Equity Principles is educational research which suggests that the following groups are disadvantaged in gaining access to the curriculum and participating fully in its aspects:

- ◆ students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- ◆ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ◆ students learning English as a second language
- ◆ students of non-English speaking background
- ◆ students who live in isolated rural communities
- ◆ students who have a physical or intellectual disability.

In addition, both girls and boys are disadvantaged by various forms of gender stereotyping.

The Statement of Values and the Statement of Principles derived from it are to be applied to all syllabuses in all subjects, to support materials, examinations and teaching kits.

# Statement of Values

Board of Studies syllabuses and other materials should incorporate aims, objectives, outcomes, content, teaching, learning and assessment strategies which:

## Support the pursuit of excellence

- (a) place a high value on learning, inquiry, rational discourse and critical reflection, the pursuit of excellence and the attainment of knowledge and skills;

## Support quality teaching and learning

- (b) encourage high standards of achievement and enjoyment of learning by good teaching and learning practice;

## Encourage personal growth and self-confidence

- (c) enable students to accept themselves as worthwhile individuals;
- (d) encourage students to develop, explore and maintain their personal integrity in situations of challenge or stress;
- (e) place a high value on individual development within a social context;

## Promote a fair and just society

- (f) provide all students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable them to be critical thinkers and to participate actively as individuals and as cooperative members of a group;
- (g) encourage the democratic values of recognition of diverse opinions, open rational debate, respect for persons, equality before the law and participation in democratic processes;
- (h) encourage knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes which facilitate the non-violent resolution of conflict and an understanding of the underlying causes of human conflict;
- (i) encourage students to develop knowledge, attitudes and values which are crucial to the achievement of social justice;
- (j) are free from and reject prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping on the basis of race, gender, class, beliefs, ethnicity, age, sexuality or disability;

## Value diversity

- (k) value the diversity of Australian society and multiculturalism as a positive feature of our society;
- (l) acknowledge and are sensitive to the culture, religious background and prior experiences of all students regardless of their gender, ethnicity or beliefs;
- (m) recognise that students come to their studies with diverse backgrounds and provide constructive educational experiences which build on those backgrounds;

## Encourage English language literacy

- (n) provide for all students to develop their proficiency in the English language in all areas of the curriculum;

## Are environmentally sensitive

- (o) appreciate the complexity and fragility of the Australian and global biophysical environment and encourage rational, informed and sensitive consideration of its use.

# Statement of Equity Principles

## 1. Supporting the Pursuit of Excellence

Materials will support the pursuit of excellence by:

- enabling all students to develop to their full potential  
and
- catering for the developmental needs of students across the years of schooling.

### **(a) Enabling students to develop to their full potential**

Board syllabuses and support materials should facilitate the development of all students to their full potential, across all domains (eg intellectual, creative, psycho-motor and social-emotional).

To achieve this, syllabuses, support documents and other materials will:

- provide a range of annotated work samples which will show evidence of the achievement of outcomes across a range of levels;
- provide advice about a range of approaches to assessment which will show evidence of the achievement of outcomes across a range of domains (eg intellectual, creative, psycho-motor and social-emotional);
- provide appropriate materials for students who can move quickly through the curriculum;
- specify content and strategies which develop skills including problem-solving, critical thinking skills, abstract thinking, analysis, creativity;
- provide opportunities for students to think holistically by emphasising the integration of outcomes across subject areas;
- provide a variety of assessment methods to cater for the needs of the full range of students (eg competency skill-based testing, oral/aural presentation, practical tasks, research);
- focus on communication rather than language to cater for the needs of students who use forms of communication other than speech (eg signing, pictorial systems and object symbols).

## **(b) Incorporating developmental/early childhood perspectives**

Board documents should cater for the developmental needs of children across the range of junior and senior primary years, but particularly the early childhood years.

In order to achieve this, Board syllabuses and other products will:

- acknowledge that as children progress through major developmental phases there are qualitative differences in the ways in which children learn (process information and construct cognitive representations of knowledge);
- acknowledge that there are considerable variations in the rates at which children progress through these developmental stages;
- contain statements that are developmentally appropriate to children as they progress through these phases;
- include advice to teachers on implementing strategies that are based on developmentally appropriate curriculum, assessment and teaching practices, in particular, active learning in the early years;
- provide for a range of opportunities for children to learn through active problem-solving strategies;
- acknowledge the importance of observing children's behaviours in a range of settings/activities when developing learning opportunities and programs for individual students;
- acknowledge the importance of supporting children emotionally, particularly in the early years;
- ensure that curriculum, assessment and teaching activities address the development of positive self-esteem in all students.

## **2. Supporting Quality Teaching and Learning**

Materials will only encourage high standards of achievement and enjoyment of learning if they are:

- clear and explicit  
and
- of intrinsic value and significance to all students.

### **(a) Clear and explicit materials**

An important element of good teaching practice is that all students should, at all times, be aware of what is being taught, why it is being taught, how it is being taught, how it fits into a sequence of learning, how it will be assessed, and what is expected of them. Assessment should relate to the goals of the curriculum, be shaped to reinforce the intentions of learning and relate to standards explicitly stated and exemplified for easy comprehension by teachers, parents and students.

Teaching practice that includes these elements will facilitate higher standards of achievement and greater enjoyment of learning for all students, but in particular, students with lower levels of literacy in English, and those who may be less 'system wise' than their peers.

Board syllabuses and other materials will complement and facilitate good teaching practice by:

- being clear and explicit
- being written in plain English
- enabling students to understand:
  - the nature of the course
  - the purpose of the course
  - course requirements
  - course structure
  - assessment requirements
  - course outcomes
- recommending assessment tasks which:
  - relate to the objectives and outcomes of the syllabus
  - are shaped to, and reinforce, the intentions of learning
  - relate to standards explicitly stated and exemplified for comprehension by teachers, parents and students.

In addition to supporting good teaching practice, these requirements are of particular importance to students who are isolated. Students may be isolated for a variety of reasons. They may be geographically isolated, hospitalised, in legal custody, their families may be itinerant, or may have attitudes or values which conflict with regular schooling. People who are not teachers may be significant in the process of the education of isolated students; for example, parents, caregivers, medical staff and other community members. Syllabuses, support documents and other materials should be clear and explicit and written in plain English so that they are accessible to non-teacher supervisors.

### **(b) Content of intrinsic value and significance**

If students are to achieve high standards and enjoy learning, then what they learn must be of intrinsic value and significance to them. All students, but in particular those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, require knowledge that is of intrinsic value to them as well as that which is valued broadly by society. There is a need to ensure that all students are provided with the core disciplines such as language, mathematics and the natural and social sciences, disciplines which are socially and vocationally empowering. Access to this knowledge should be grounded in contexts which will be familiar to and valued by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Board syllabuses and other materials will include outcomes of intrinsic value and significance to all students, but especially students from low socioeconomic backgrounds by:

- making explicit in the K–12 curriculum multi-disciplinary elements such as democratic understanding and practices; the world of work; nature and production of the economy; the role of technology in society; environmental responsibility; the role of institutions in society; media and communication; family and community; individual and human rights; cultural diversity and creativity;
- making explicit in the K–12 curriculum key competencies that are integral to the syllabus;
- developing and reinforcing skills which are analytical, practical, creative and expressive.

### **3. Encouraging Personal Growth and Self-confidence**

#### **(a) Encouraging self-esteem**

Syllabuses and support materials will encourage a positive self-image and self-confidence in all students by:

- including resources, illustrations and content from both genders and a range of cultures and backgrounds with which students may identify in a positive way;
- ensuring that assessment, as far as possible, identifies students' successes;
- incorporating strategies to promote an educational environment of high expectations.

#### **(b) Promoting individual development within a social context**

Board syllabuses and support materials will place a high value on individual development within a social context by providing assistance to teachers to:

- enable students to understand the fullness of social and economic futures open to them;
- develop in students high expectations of themselves so that they may be more likely to achieve their desired social and economic futures;
- enable students to understand the educational pathways and required standards leading to desired futures.

These requirements are of particular importance to Indigenous Australian students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

### **(c) Promoting self-directed learning**

Board syllabuses, support documents and other materials will:

- enable students to develop skills as self-directed learners.

This requirement will benefit all students, but particularly isolated students who, in many instances, have to take greater responsibility for their learning than other students.

## **4. Promoting a Fair and Just Society**

### **(a) Encouraging critical thinking about social processes**

Board syllabuses and other materials should encourage all students to reflect critically upon all social institutions and processes.

Board syllabuses and other materials will:

- provide assistance to teachers to enable students to address the following questions in relation to all social institutions and processes (including those associated with race, class, gender and sexuality):

Where does this institution/process come from?

Whose interests does it serve?

How does it affect me/my community?

How could this institution/process be different?

Should this institution/process be different?

If so, what can I (or we) do to change it?

- provide opportunities to increase students' awareness and understanding of how gender and sexuality are constructed and the impact this has on determining the life choices of females and males of all ages with particular reference to the influence of family, peers, and the media;
- enable students to understand that Australia has an Indigenous Australian history and to reflect Indigenous Australian viewpoints, interests, perceptions and expectations on social and historical matters;
- enable students to analyse and understand the forces behind cultural change and diversity in Australia. (These forces include the impact of British colonisation on Indigenous Australians and the successive waves of immigration, which have shaped Australian society since first contact.)

## **(b) Freedom from prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping**

Syllabuses, support documents and assessment materials will be free from, and reject, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping on the basis of race, gender, class, beliefs, ethnicity, age, sexuality or disability by:

- using gender-inclusive language;
- portraying neither males nor females in a way that encourages stereotyping;
- including knowledge and skill content that values equally the achievements of women and men and boys and girls;
- incorporating features and strategies that promote balanced participation of boys and girls;
- enabling all students to develop knowledge of, appreciation for and empathy with Indigenous Australian peoples, cultures and histories;
- reflecting Australia's ethnic composition in the range of pictorial materials, examples, exercises, assessment tasks and in prescribed or recommended texts and resource materials. (This does not mean that ethnocentric or culturally biased materials cannot be presented. They can be a useful educational tool if students have the opportunity to identify the shortcomings of such texts and contrast them with other perspectives);
- avoiding 'country of origin' stereotypes where cultural norms and values of particular ethnic groups are presented, the preferred reference point being the Australian context;
- promoting student awareness of, and respect for, the equal rights of all individuals and groups, including their rights to have different beliefs and values and encouraging students to respect those rights;
- assisting teachers to promote equity and to counter stereotyping.

## **(c) Promoting non-violent resolution of conflict**

Board syllabuses, support documents and other materials will encourage knowledge, skills and attitudes which facilitate the non-violent resolution of conflict and an understanding of the underlying causes of human conflict by:

- enabling students to develop skills in effective communication and conflict resolution;
- enabling girls and boys to acquire an understanding about gender-based and other harassment and related issues;
- promoting values, attitudes and behaviours which foster a safe and supportive learning environment for girls and boys;
- promoting respect for each individual leading towards the acceptance of the rights of people of both genders to make choices about their sexuality;
- providing opportunities for students to understand the causes and effects of all forms of discrimination, its relevance to the Australian scene, and to the students' own circumstances.

## 5. Valuing Diversity

The Board believes that all students are entitled to receive an education that takes account of their special characteristics as learners. Students differ in their gender, sexuality, cultural heritage, indigenouness, socioeconomic status, where they live, the language spoken in their home and their abilities/disabilities. Board syllabuses and assessment materials will be written with sensitivity to the variations in life experiences and accessibility to learning experiences, which may be the result of such differences, singly or in combination.

Board syllabuses, support documents and other materials will:

- be appropriate and relevant to the full range of students, so that all students can experience success;
- assist teachers to be aware that all students have experiences which provide a positive basis for learning, for example:
  - assisting teachers to be aware that students who are learning English as a second language are in the process of becoming bilingual or multilingual users of English and that they enter the Australian school system with a range of abilities (linguistic, cognitive, cultural) which form a positive basis for learning;
  - assisting teachers to be aware of the cultural diversity that results in bringing different experiences to the classroom;
- provide a range of learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of all students, for example:
  - avoiding the prescription of learning experiences for which unequal access to resources or isolation (geographical or other) could be an impediment to some students;
- provide a range of assessment strategies that cater for the diverse needs of all students, for example:
  - providing assistance to teachers to be aware of the implications for the achievement of girls and boys of particular modes of assessment;
  - prescribing assessment tasks which are able to be fulfilled by isolated students;
- promote student appreciation of, and empathy for, the different experiences of people that are related to differences in gender, sexuality, cultural and linguistic heritage, indigenouness, where they live, their abilities/disabilities and their socioeconomic backgrounds;
- include values, attitudes, objectives and outcomes which help all students develop:
  - a respect for the equal worth of all students;
  - cross-cultural understanding through an examination of their own attitudes, values and beliefs, and the attitudes, values and beliefs of others;
  - an appreciation of the benefits to all of living in a multicultural society and acknowledgment of the advantages of acquiring more than one language;
  - a sense of personal worth through an understanding and appreciation of both their Australian national identities and their ethnic identities.

## 6. Promoting Indigenous Australian Perspectives

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education includes both the overall education of Indigenous Australian students and the education of all students about Indigenous Australian people, cultures and history. The Board recognises that:

- the educational needs of Indigenous Australian students are influenced by the values of Indigenous Australian cultures, the historical experiences of Indigenous Australian people and contemporary experience of poverty and discrimination;
- knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian people, cultures and history are essential to a complete understanding of Australian society;
- consultation and negotiation with Indigenous Australian communities are essential to curriculum development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education;
- the NSW AECG Inc is the principal consultative and negotiating body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in NSW;
- a variety of processes is needed for effective consultation and negotiation with diverse Indigenous Australian communities.

The Board is committed to the implementation of the education-related recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. This Statement of Principles will facilitate the implementation of its recommendations in educational settings.

The Board is committed to the achievement of the goals incorporated in the *Commonwealth Reconciliation Act* and recognises the fundamental role education has to play in the reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Board is committed to collaborative and cooperative efforts with other government agencies to ensure the highest quality education services.

In its curriculum development process and products the Board will:

- ensure the involvement of Indigenous Australian communities in curriculum development through representation on Board Curriculum Committees, consultative networks and writing teams;
- incorporate strategies to enable Indigenous Australian students to attain the same educational outcomes as the wider Australian community;
- ensure that curriculum reflects the fact that Australia has an Indigenous Australian history and reflects Indigenous Australian viewpoints, interests, perceptions and expectations on social, cultural and historical matters;
- incorporate strategies to enable all students to develop a knowledge of, appreciation for, and empathy with Indigenous Australian peoples, cultures and histories;
- promote self-esteem and self-confidence in Indigenous Australian students through the valuing of their culture and histories;
- make all students aware of the rights of Indigenous Australians to have different values and beliefs and encourage students to respect those rights;

- ensure opportunities for the involvement and participation of Indigenous Australian communities in schools;
- promote the development of knowledge and understanding of the educational needs of Indigenous Australian students within all sections of the education community;
- promote understanding in the wider community of the issues involved in Indigenous Australian education, eg strategies for successful implementation of policies and programs;
- incorporate strategies to achieve a strengthening of Aboriginal identity, decision-making and self-determination.

## 7. Encouraging English Language Literacy

Board syllabuses, support documents and other materials will provide for all students to develop their proficiency in the English language in all areas of the curriculum by:

- assisting teachers to provide opportunities for students to speak and write about a subject in a variety of contexts;
- explicitly including the language of the subject in syllabus content and providing for students to develop competence in the vocabulary, registers, functions and structure of subject-oriented language;
- acknowledging the influence that development of a student's first language has on that student's English language development;
- reflecting the fact that the learning of a subject and the learning of language skills occur concurrently.

These requirements are of particular importance to students who are learning English as a second language. In general, these students achieve rapid mastery of conversational English, but often need many years before their competence in English enables them to perform academic tasks equivalent to those of their age-grade peers for whom English is their first language.