



B O A R D O F S T U D I E S
NEW SOUTH WALES

An Introduction to Agriculture Stage 6 in the New HSC

The new *Agriculture Stage 6 Syllabus* replaces the current *Agriculture 2/3 Unit (Common) Syllabus* (1994) and the *Agriculture 3 Unit (Additional) Syllabus* (1994). The new syllabus is designed to be implemented in 2000 and will be first examined in 2001.

The syllabus provides information that was formerly available in the KLA handbook. This includes descriptions of course requirements, assessment weightings for internal and external examination and examination specifications. It also includes information about key competencies and post-school opportunities.

What is similar?

The new *Agriculture Stage 6 Syllabus* has a Preliminary course and an HSC course. It represents a minor change in structure and content from the current *Agriculture 2/3 Unit (Common) Syllabus*. Some of the topics and learning opportunities provided in the current *Agriculture 3 Unit (Additional) Syllabus* have been incorporated into the new HSC course.

Much of the new Preliminary course is the same as the Preliminary course in the current *Agriculture 2/3 Unit (Common) Syllabus*. As in the current Preliminary course, students are required to undertake a Farm Case Study and to study aspects of both animal and plant production.

The new Preliminary course, like the current course, incorporates the study of the interactions between the components of agricultural production, marketing and management, while giving consideration to the issues of sustainability of the farming system. This is an 'on-farm, environment-orientated course'.

The core of the new HSC course is very similar to the core of the current HSC course. The new HSC course, like the current course, 'examines the complexity and scientific principles of the components of agricultural production, but places a greater emphasis on the place of the farm in the wider economic, environmental and social environment. The farm as a fundamental production unit provides a basis for analysing and addressing social, environmental and economic issues as they relate to sustainability, from a national and international perspective. This is achieved through the farm/product study.' (p 11)

The list of electives in the new HSC course has been expanded to include some electives that are in the current 3 Unit (Additional) course such as Agribusiness and Horticulture. In the new HSC course, students have the option of studying 2 elective topics or undertaking a research project similar to the Major Research Project that is a mandatory component of the current 3 Unit (Additional) course.

Students can choose two electives from:

- Agribusiness
- Innovation and diversification
- Plant management
- Horticulture
- Animal management
- Sustainable land and resource management.

What are the overall improvements?

The new syllabus provides all students with the opportunity to access challenging outcomes and content, including some content that was part of the current 3 Unit course. Students can now elect to undertake a research project or alternatively study two elective options.

The number of outcomes has been significantly reduced. The new Preliminary course describes eight outcomes that replace 77 outcomes in the current Preliminary course. The new HSC course describes nine outcomes that replace 75 outcomes in the current HSC course.

The overlap in the content of the current Preliminary and HSC courses has been removed. In the new syllabus, outcomes are aligned to course content and there is a clear distinction between outcomes and content in both the Preliminary and HSC courses.

The scope and depth of course content is made clear in the new syllabus by the description of what ‘students learn about’ and what ‘students learn to’.

The clear description of content assists teachers to know what is to be assessed and examined.

The following changes have been made to particular sections of the syllabus:

Rationale, Aim and Objectives (pp 6–7, 9)

The rationale has been expanded and provides details on the role of the new syllabus in the curriculum and the learning opportunities it provides for students.

The aim now succinctly states the intention of the syllabus and places an increased emphasis on sustainable agricultural production, management and marketing.

The objectives have been reduced to five statements that integrate the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that are central to Agriculture Stage 6.

Course Structure (p 9–11)

The syllabus includes a new structure. The overview of this structure is described in the following tables.

2 Unit Preliminary Course	
Overview of Australian Agriculture	(15%)
The Farm Case Study	(25%)
Plant Production	(30%)
Animal Production	(30%)

2 Unit HSC Course	
Core Topics 70%	
Plant/Animal Production	(45%)
Farm Enterprise/Product Study	(25%)
Optional Components	
2 electives (15% each)	
Agribusiness	
Horticulture	
Innovation and diversification	
Animal management	
Plant management	
Sustainable land and resource management	
OR	
Research project (30%)	

Outcomes (p 12)

The outcomes have been greatly reduced in number and now describe the specific intended results of each course. Outcomes in the new syllabus encompass the outcomes of the current 2 Unit syllabus and where appropriate those of the current 3 Unit syllabus.

They provide specific statements of the knowledge and understanding, skills and values that each student is expected to achieve by the end of the course as a result of effective teaching and learning. The HSC course outcomes build upon those of the Preliminary course in terms of increased rigour, complexity and skill level.

The outcomes relevant to each component of the Preliminary and HSC courses are identified in the content section of the syllabus. In the new HSC course the outcomes stated in the electives and the optional research project are the same.

Content (p 14–29)

The content to be addressed in each component has been clearly refined to encourage deeper investigation and practical application. In the Preliminary course, students are required to carry out a Farm Case Study by visiting a selected farm and to conduct at least one plant or animal trial. The syllabus specifies that all activities involving animals must comply with the *Animal Research Act 1985* (NSW).

In the new HSC course, the elective components and the optional research project all require students to learn about research methodology and presentation of research.

Course Requirements (p 30)

For both the Preliminary and HSC courses, practical experiences should occupy a minimum of 30% of course time.

Assessment (pp 32–41)

New specifications for internal assessment (p 35) provide greater flexibility as they distribute weightings across the components of the Preliminary and HSC courses rather than simply to knowledge, understanding and skills.

The use of a range and balance of assessment tasks is encouraged. It is expected that the assessment tasks will not simply replicate the external examination. Internal assessment tasks should assess outcomes and course content that cannot only be assessed by the external examination.

What will be needed to teach this subject?

- *Agriculture Stage 6 Syllabus.*
- Specimen examination and marking guidelines.

The current *Agriculture Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC Courses Support Document (1997)* provides advice in areas that are still relevant to the new Agriculture Stage 6 Syllabus. These areas include: programming, the farm case study, the farm/product study, practical work, the student research project and references and resources.

While programs will need to be revised to reflect new syllabus content and outcomes, aspects of current programs may be incorporated where appropriate.

Equipment, used in schools, that meets the requirements of the current syllabus should be adequate to meet the requirements of the new syllabus.

Current resources are appropriate for use with the new syllabuses although there may need to be some adjustment in the way teachers use them.

A further subject-specific document is being developed by the Board of Studies for distribution later in the year. This will assist teachers with the implementation of the revised syllabuses.

A list of a number of resources will be placed on the Board's website, <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>.

The Board of Studies will also provide assessment support materials, which will be generic across subjects.

Cross-sectoral professional development workshops (Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Commission and members of the Association of Independent Schools) for Agriculture Stage 6 will be held. Venues and dates for these workshops have been published on the *New HSC* website — <http://www.newhsc.schools.nsw.edu.au> — and distributed to schools. The materials from the workshops will be available on this website.

CURRICULUM SUPPORT for Teaching in Technology and Applied Studies 7–12 — a publication distributed each term by the Department of Education and Training — will carry an HSC supplement.

Assessment and Reporting Bulletin — published each term as a joint venture of the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools — will build on principles outlined in Board of Studies' newsletters and assessment support materials.