



An Introduction to Economics Stage 6 in the New HSC

The new *Economics Stage 6 Syllabus* replaces the current syllabus for 2 unit and 3 unit Economics. The new syllabus is to be implemented with Year 11 in 2000 and will be first examined in 2001.

The new 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.

What is similar to the current syllabus?

Economics Stage 6 has taken into account developments in the subject matter. Elements of the current 2 unit course and 3 unit course are incorporated into the new syllabus. The subject matter in the new syllabus has common elements with the current syllabus, with an economic problems and issues focus.

What are the overall improvements?

- The new *Economics Stage 6 Syllabus* incorporates a *problems and issues* approach. This is particularly evident in the skills developed across the syllabus. The skills are highlighted in the “*students learn to*” section within each topic, where students examine economic issues and apply economic skills in relation to the topic. The new syllabus requires students to investigate *economic problems and issues* in both contemporary and hypothetical economic situations.
- Students will develop skills of investigation and analysis so that new economic issues can be examined as they arise.
- Outcomes are course outcomes – there are no topic outcomes. The outcomes listed in topics are course outcomes related to that topic.
- Assessment is related directly to outcomes through internal assessment, components and weightings, examination questions and marking criteria, and performance scales.
- Each topic is introduced with a succinct statement explaining the focus of the topic to guide teachers and students.

- Course content has been made more explicit and the amount of content has been significantly reduced.
- There are no options in the new syllabus. All students will learn the same content based on the course outcomes.

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

Rationale, Aim and Objectives (pp 6–8)

- The rationale emphasises the crucial role economic decisions have in society and how economic problems and issues dominate media and politics. By understanding economics, students are empowered to participate effectively and knowledgeably in economic debate.
- The theoretical basis of the discipline of Economics is acknowledged in the rationale, as are the benefits students will gain through the study of Economics for employment, tertiary study and other post-school destinations.
- The aim and objectives of the syllabus flow from the rationale in emphasising the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes students will develop through learning in the syllabus.
- The rationale, aim and objectives of the syllabus reflect an emphasis on the students' ability to develop effective economic thinking, which is demonstrated through the application of skills and knowledge to contemporary and hypothetical economic situations.

Course Structure (p 9)

- There are six topics in the Preliminary course that introduce the subject matter and allow students to investigate markets and the role of government in the economy.
- The HSC course has four topics that deal with the global economy, with specific reference to Australia and economic issues, policies and management.
- There are no options in the Preliminary and HSC courses.

Outcomes (p 10–11)

- The Stage 6 outcomes have been reduced in number. The outcomes link to the syllabus objectives, with outcomes differentiated between the Preliminary and HSC courses.
- The outcomes are linked explicitly to the syllabus content.
- There are knowledge and understanding outcomes and skills outcomes for both the Preliminary and HSC courses. The outcomes are written to describe a development of student knowledge, understanding and skills from the Preliminary course to the HSC course.

- The skills outcomes (page 11) are linked to the *Students learn to* section of each topic and place requirements on teaching and learning such as working in groups, communicating economic information and applying mathematical concepts.

Content (p 13)

- There is clear distinction of outcomes and content between Preliminary and HSC courses, with the outcomes aligned to content in each course.
- The scope and depth of course content is made clear by the description of what students learn. The alignment of the *learn about* and the *learn to* sections of the content will assist teachers to combine and teach the skills and knowledge aspects of each topic.
- The Preliminary course continues to play an important role in the development of core knowledge, understanding and skills as background and foundation for the HSC course. The Preliminary course is essentially ‘microeconomic’ in nature, with emphasis on the role and operation of markets and areas such as the institutions of the labour market, the influence of the cash rate and the Federal Budget process.
- The Higher School Certificate course is ‘macroeconomic’ in focus. The main topic areas concern globalisation and economic problems and issues and the policy and economic management responses to the problems and issues. The analysis of economic problems and issues incorporates both contemporary Australian situations and hypothetical contexts.
- Key issues in the syllabus are listed on page 13 – they are an essential feature of the new Economics syllabus. They should be highlighted wherever possible in the teaching and learning program and in classroom activities to strengthen the understanding of students and to provide a context for student learning.

Assessment (p 38)

- A range of instruments in school-based assessment is proposed (see pp 41, 42) to assess student performance in relation to the outcomes.
- Examination specifications meet the requirements of the revised syllabus and of standards-referenced assessment. They include a range of question types to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do in Economics.

What will be needed to teach this subject?

- *Economics Stage 6 Syllabus.*
- Economics Stage 6 Higher School Certificate Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement (the sample examination, marking guidelines and draft performance scale).

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 Economics 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 Human Society and Its Environment 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.

The professional teachers' association, Economics and Business Educators (EBE) offer the following professional development activity:

- Economics Preliminary Course — 3 and 4 September 1999, at St Andrews Cathedral School. The program will provide an overview of the Preliminary course, programming workshops, information on assessment and performance scales, assessment workshops and a forum on teaching and learning ideas and resources.