



An Introduction to Legal Studies Stage 6 in the New HSC

The new *Legal Studies Stage 6 Syllabus* replaces the current 2 Unit Legal Studies syllabus (1994) and 3 Unit Legal Studies syllabus (1995). The new *Legal Studies Stage 6 Syllabus* is for implementation with Year 11 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.

What is similar?

The new *Legal Studies Stage 6 Syllabus* is similar to the current syllabus.

Students will continue to undertake a broad study of the legal system, its principles, structures, institutions and processes as well as having the opportunity to examine aspects of the legal system more closely through optional focus studies. The syllabus content as a whole remains substantially the same, but there has been considerable reorganisation in order to incorporate aspects of the 3 unit course and to ensure coherence across the Preliminary and HSC courses. A number of central themes continue to underpin the study of all parts of the course, although these have been further refined and a new theme about the effectiveness of the legal system has been added.

Aspects of 3 Unit material have been incorporated into the course through the inclusion of international law in both the Preliminary and HSC core studies and optional focus studies.

What are the overall improvements?

- The new Legal Studies syllabus has a much greater emphasis on outcomes, that is, what students know and can do as a result of studying Legal Studies Stage 6.
- The content is more explicit and linked more directly to outcomes.
- Common frameworks have been used to organise the content of the focus groups in the Preliminary course and for the focus studies in the HSC course to ensure greater coherence and more comparable experiences for students across the whole course, regardless of the options they study.
- Assessment is related directly to outcomes through internal assessment, components and weightings, examination questions, the marking criteria and performance scales. These, together with the course design and comparability between options, ensure more common experiences for students making both the syllabus and examination fairer.

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

Rationale, Aim and Objectives (pp 6, 8)

The rationale, aim and objectives are similar to the current syllabus but have been redrafted to provide greater coherence and explicit links with outcomes and content. The objectives now include reference to knowledge and understanding of the rule of law.

Course Structure (pp 9–10)

The Preliminary course has been re-structured in three parts:

Part I:	The Legal System	(40% of course time)
Part II:	The Individual and the State	(20% of course time)
Part III:	The Law in Focus	(40% of course time).

The most significant changes to the structure of the Preliminary course have been to:

- move the study of crime from the Preliminary to the HSC course
- add the topic, The Law in Focus. This contains a number of options and provides a dynamic context for the application of knowledge and understanding gained in Parts I and II
- move the topic The Individual and the State from the HSC course to the Preliminary course
- reduce the weighting of The Legal System from 50% to 40% of the course.

The HSC course has been restructured into three parts:

Part I:	Law and Society	(25% of course time)
Part II:	Focus Study: Crime	(25% of course time)
Part III:	Additional Focus Studies	(50% of course time).

The most significant changes to the structure of the HSC course have been to:

- remove the overview of the Australian Legal System as the introductory topic
- include 50% core study (Parts I and II)
- make the two Additional Focus Studies (Part III) each worth 25% of the course
- include a framework through which the Focus Study: Crime and the Additional Focus Studies are examined. This framework provides some continuity from the framework developed for the Preliminary course.

Outcomes (pp 11–12)

Outcomes have been:

- reduced in number and organised in relation to the objectives
- differentiated between Preliminary and HSC and linked more explicitly to the syllabus content
- developed to cater for the full range of students.

Content (pp 14–66)

There has been minimal change to the syllabus in terms of content although it has been presented using a different format and there has been some rearrangement of material to meet the changed structure of the Preliminary and HSC courses.

The content for each part of the syllabus has been organised using a common format:

- Each of the six parts of the syllabus (three Preliminary and three HSC) is introduced by a brief overview of the topics for study and the general framework within which each topic is to be studied.
- Each topic is structured to include:
 - the principal focus or broad purpose of the topic
 - the course outcomes to be addressed through the topic
 - explicit statements of what students *learn about* in order to achieve the outcomes
 - key questions/issues provided as a starting point for discussion.

Other changes to content include:

- organisation of the content of the HSC focus studies using a common framework that ensures comparability of scope, depth and conceptual difficulty across all the studies
- placement of the international law component in the Preliminary course as a way of ensuring all students are exposed to some teaching about the operation of law at the international level
- *International Law* in the HSC course complementing the *Operation of the Law* at the national level, particularly the *Human Rights* section in the core study
- inclusion of the core areas of the four current 3 unit modules among the range of choices as focus studies. The four depth studies of each module have been almost entirely deleted, though some material has been taken up to enhance the reformatted focus studies.

Assessment (pp 69–76)

There are some changes to both internal and external assessment requirements and advice:

- stronger guidelines are provided for internal assessment to ensure a balanced assessment program where research and oral communication are specifically addressed
- examination specifications meet the requirements of the revised course and of standards referenced assessment. They include a range of question types to allow the full range of students the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do.

What will be needed to teach this subject?

- *Legal Studies Stage 6 Syllabus*.
- Legal Studies 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 syllabus 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 Legal Studies 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 It's 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.

MESSTA (Metropolitan East Social Science Teachers Association) is organising, in conjunction with the Law Society, its two day Annual Legal Studies Conference (11–12 October) to support the new Legal Studies syllabus.

Venue: Parliament House and Wesley Centre, Sydney

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LSA (Legal Studies Association of NSW) is holding two information evenings:

- Programming the Legal Studies syllabus
Monday 26 July 1999, 4.30-8.00pm
- Assessment – Criteria Assessment in Legal Studies
Monday 30 August 1999, 4.30-8.00pm

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