Society and Culture
Stage 6
Draft Syllabus

Consultation Report

2013
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1 Introduction

This consultation report provides:

- background to the revision of the Stage 6 Society and Culture syllabus
- the syllabus development and consultation processes
- respondents to the survey, including quantitative and qualitative analysis
- submissions to the draft syllabus
- findings from the teacher consultation meetings
- the main issues raised and how they have been addressed in the final syllabus
- key continuities and changes to the Stage 6 Society and Culture syllabus.

2 Background

In October 2012, the Board of Studies approved a revision of the Stage 6 Society and Culture syllabus. The nature of the subject matter in the syllabus aims to be contemporary, and this contributed to the need to review and revise the syllabus. While some contemporary material could be accommodated within the current content, new aspects of society and its cultures are not addressed and other aspects of contemporary society have changed substantially. These should be included in a revised syllabus. Other aspects of the content are no longer pertinent or are much reduced in relevance.

The 2010 changes to the HSC examination of Society and Culture included the introduction of multiple-choice and short-answer questions for the core, and structured short-answer questions for the depth studies. The syllabus was not originally written to provide for multiple-choice questions. The core section of the current syllabus has many parts of the content that cannot be examined, leading to a relatively narrow range of content from which to generate questions. This issue has become increasingly problematic after a number of years of the new examination structure.

Main directions of change to the syllabus

To establish directions for change to the syllabus, focus groups of teachers at metropolitan and regional centres were consulted during December 2012. In addition, other key education stakeholders – including systems and sectors, the teacher professional association (the Society and Culture Association), the Chief Examiner, and the Supervisor of Marking – were consulted. Findings from the consultation were used to determine a Key Directions Report providing information about the current syllabus and suggestions for the nature and shape of the revised Stage 6 Society and Culture syllabus.

The main directions for change to the syllabus from the 2012 consultation process indicated that the revised syllabus should:

- maintain the structure and flexibility of the current syllabus
- cater for the nature of current and likely future students, their interests and learning styles
- enhance the contemporary nature of the syllabus and the areas of study
- maintain the syllabus structure – the Preliminary course to maintain three modules, and the HSC course to maintain the Personal Interest Project (PIP), a core and four depth studies
• revise aspects of section 8 of the syllabus, noting how it is valued by teachers and widely used in the development of the HSC examination; the revision should:
  – review the social and cultural research methodologies section to clarify the methods, remove confusion and ensure accuracy
  – review the social and cultural literacy section, including the diagrams, for accuracy, additions, deletions and adjustments

• remove overlap and repetition and update the Preliminary course

• extensively review the HSC core to ensure that the content is more explicit and is written to support the examination structure of multiple-choice and short-answer questions

• revise the HSC depth studies to provide greater consistency and certainty, including the structure across the modules and the amount of content in each part of the depth studies

• delete the Work and Leisure depth study, which has many fewer students completing it at the HSC examination than the other depth studies; it should be replaced by a new depth study

• address the manner of the ‘future’ within the depth studies.

3 Syllabus development and consultation processes

Following the determination of the directions for change to the Society and Culture syllabus, the Board’s syllabus development and consultation procedures were followed.

A Society and Culture Reference Group was formed, with membership including representatives from the Society and Culture Association, academics, the Supervisor of Marking, expert Society and Culture teachers, and systems representatives. The Reference Group provided oversight of the syllabus development process and professional advice about the revised syllabus and its quality.

Syllabus writers were contracted to:

• develop a draft syllabus based on the Key Directions Report and additional submissions from the Society and Culture Association and the Supervisor of Marking

• make amendments to the draft syllabus to develop a final Stage 6 Society and Culture syllabus following consultation with teachers and key groups.

The draft Society and Culture syllabus was developed and published on the Board website in May 2013. The Board coordinated consultation activities to seek the feedback of teachers and other stakeholders on the draft syllabus. This consultation commenced in May and continued until 14 June 2013 and included:

• a consultation survey published on the Board website

• consultation meetings with teachers in metropolitan and regional centres

• a meeting with school systems representatives

• a meeting with the professional association

• a Society and Culture Reference Group consultation meeting.

Findings from the consultation were used to determine amendments to the Stage 6 Society and Culture Draft syllabus.
4 Summary of respondents

Survey respondents
Sixty-eight survey responses.

Sector:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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Response from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal – School Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>63</td>
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</table>

Number of people contributing to the response:

<table>
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<th>Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Submissions
Seven submissions:
- Society and Culture Association (the teacher professional association)
- four academics
- two teachers.

Consultation meetings
Meetings were held with:
- the Society and Culture Reference Group
- education systems and sectors
- the Society and Culture Association
- teachers at Ballina, Liverpool and Parramatta.
5 Analysis of survey responses

Society and Culture draft syllabus survey results
All questions provided a statement and asked if the respondent agreed. The options were:
SA – Strongly agree  U – Unsure  SD – Strongly disagree
A – Agree  D – Disagree

Results
Quantitative data  Qualitative data – summary of consultation comments

Q1 – Rationale and aim

The rationale is a more focused statement. It should emphasise global citizenship and 21st-century learning and skills. The academic focus and rigour of the course are clearer. The additional concepts are good. These are clearly expressed in language readily accessible by students. This is a more relevant rationale.

Q2 – Objectives and outcomes

It is a good idea to emphasise ethical research. The outcomes clearly reflect the content and skills, with a logical progression from the Preliminary course to the HSC. The objectives are much more concrete.

Q3a – Features of Preliminary and HSC content

The inclusion of globalisation, identity and the meso level are excellent. I don't like the term 'secondary', as it makes them seem less important when they are not. This is much better set out. The new distinction between concepts is good. There is an improved structure – it is clear and understandable.
Quantitative data

Q3b – Social and cultural research methodologies

These are very clearly explained and should avoid confusion for different methodologies. This will enhance the quality of the exam questions and marking, as the PIP quality improves. The ethical section is important and well written. The table is great. The text is too crowded. The table format is much more accessible for students! This is a big improvement on the current syllabus. The layout is clear.

Q3c – Social and cultural literacy

The introduction of the meso level is relevant as a 'gap' between micro and macro levels. The diagrams are too complex and confusing. The diagram does not complement the text in the box. The meso level is a good addition. The text is clear, but the diagram needs work. This provides a great basis for social literacy development.

Q4 – Topic structure

This needs clarifying, as currently it is a bit vague. The layering of concepts is useful for teachers and students. The layout is good. The contemporary communication technologies section is very good. The contemporary context is not user friendly. This provides more structure to integrate concepts.
Quantitative data

Qualitative data – summary of consultation comments

Q5a – Preliminary topic 1:
The Social and Cultural World

This will allow for more explicit teaching of methodologies and validates the additional time. The content is good, but there may be too much.

Q5b – Preliminary topic 2:
Personal and Social Identity

This is much improved and should allow for greater differentiation of students. Why are the theorists in two groups? There are good theorists chosen here. There are concerns about the literacy and cognitive levels needed for the theorists.

Q5c – Preliminary topic 3:
Intercultural Communication

The method interviewing may be difficult in rural areas. This is good, as it needed revision. Some of this is beyond ‘average’ students.
Quantitative data

Qualitative data – summary of consultation comments

Q5d – Quality of the Preliminary course

The addition of social theories makes this more accessible. These are extremely positive changes. The bar has been raised for academic rigour. The contemporary context needs to be clearer – make it ‘integrate’. The timing changes make sense. There are too many theorists.

Q5e – Preliminary teaching, learning and assessment

The theorists are more contemporary. This is a good change.

Q6a – HSC core: Social and Cultural Continuity and Change

This is far clearer than the previous syllabus. Be clear on the country study – is Australia okay? Too much required for theorists. Remove modernity, a university-level discussion.
Quantitative data

Q6b – Examining the HSC core: Social and Cultural Continuity and Change

This is much more examinable, but multiple-choice may still be limited in scope. The ‘possible’ future is more difficult to assess than ‘probable’ futures. Having five theories is inconsistent; maybe three will be achievable. Teachers have a clear indication of what can be assessed. The content is explicit – that is good for students, teachers and the exam.

Q6c – HSC topic: Popular Culture

These are clearer definitions of the four characteristics. Clearly flagging what is to be done in the futures section assists teachers and students – it is far more manageable. The specific genres are much clearer.

Q6d – HSC topic: Ideologies and Belief Systems

The term ‘philosophy’ is awkward. It needs a clearer definition.
### Quantitative data

#### Q6e – HSC topic: Social Inclusion and Exclusion

Many respondents do not teach the current topic version and so indicated ‘Unsure’ in their response. The wording around the focus study needs improving.

#### Q6f – HSC topic: Social Conformity and Nonconformity

As this is a new topic, many respondents indicated ‘Unsure’ or were not prepared to comment. This is an interesting addition, but it needs clarification. A great choice! Is there some overlap with Popular Culture? Removing Work and Leisure is good, as it was not academic enough. Make the sections more comparable to the other topics. This relates well to contemporary society.

#### Q6g – Quality of the HSC course

The near future is much more suitable for students. This is more academic and engaging. Limiting to one study in each topic will help teacher time management. There needs to be more homogeneity across HSC depth studies for the different demands. This will be more engaging.
Quantitative data

Q6h – HSC outcomes, teaching and assessment

The outcomes allow for a wide scope in teaching and learning and assessment. The content is more prescriptive and so is better for questions in the exam.

Q7 – Glossary

This is much improved. Teachers can use this as a reference point for teaching and assessing. This provides improved clarity and precision of the definitions. This is far superior to the current glossary.

Overall evaluation of the syllabus

The new syllabus reflects the changing society students live in. The syllabus is exciting for both teachers and students. This is more directive and comprehensive. This is much clearer in former ‘grey’ areas, building on existing strengths and addressing weaker areas in the current syllabus. Overall, this syllabus is much clearer and more examinable – good for students and teachers. I am looking forward very much to teaching this; it is progressive, rigorous and focused. This is now a course that has come into the 21st century. There are some concerns about the literacy and academic demands on some students, including students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. This is much ‘tighter’ and rigorous, but in places may have gone too far. This is well written. I am excited to teach it! As a new teacher, this syllabus is much clearer.
6 Reporting of submissions

There were seven submissions from the following:

- Society and Culture Association (the teacher professional association)
- four academics
- two teachers.

Overall, the submissions were supportive of the revision of the syllabus and the general directions of the draft syllabus. The Society and Culture Association was broadly in favour of the draft syllabus, but did provide comment on specific aspects of the document. Two respondents, both with a long association with Society and Culture, had strong views about aspects of the draft syllabus.

Society and Culture Association

The Association indicated that its review occurred over a full day and included seven committee members plus three teachers from various regional areas to achieve a holistic overview and include a variety of teaching perspectives and experiences. The Association is supportive of the revision and provided comments of both support and concern in relation to the draft document.

The main concerns of the Association relate to the depth study Social Conformity and Nonconformity, as it is significantly longer than the other three HSC depth studies and is unbalanced when comparing the language across the depth studies. It also requires clarity for the focus study and would benefit from the inclusion of a list of appropriate groups.

Other issues included the removal of verbs that give an indication of the depth and breadth of the content; the section 8 diagrams; the implementation of a contemporary context, suggesting that it should be integrated across the depth studies; and the need to reduce the amount of text and the style of presentation in the research methodologies in section 8.2.

The submission also provided a copy of the draft syllabus with annotations as comments and suggestions – the main concerns raised include minor edits to some of the text; a review of aspects of the research methodologies; the need to review content to ensure that it has not raised the rigour of the syllabus too much; and the view that the language levels are at times too verbose.

Academics

Four academics responded to the draft syllabus and were broadly supportive.

One academic, the current Chief Examiner, was complimentary of the directions of the draft syllabus, stating that ‘overall it is a considerable improvement on what was already a strong syllabus’. He noted that the appeal of the depth study Work and Leisure had diminished and that the new syllabus will provide greater scope and flexibility to examiners and reduce the predictability of the exam.

Another academic was supportive of the draft syllabus and provided some editorial and style comments.

One academic made a strong case for reworking the section on the social research methodologies, indicating that there is a clear distinction between ‘methodology’ and ‘method’. He stated that methodologies are ‘philosophical approaches and structures to complete research based on sets of epistemological, theoretical and ontological assumptions’, while methods are instruments to gather information/data. He suggested that the table of methodologies should be revised and the columns should be titled ‘Qualitative methods’ and ‘Quantitative methods’. He further went on to support aspects of this with examples of how research is conducted, analysed and reported and the social and cultural conditions in which research is undertaken, including the values and background of the researcher.
Another academic offered some supportive comments about the draft syllabus and also provided the following suggestions:

- Technology should be made a fundamental course concept and incorporated into the course logo diagram. This reflects its central role and impact in the lives of students and the whole of society. It includes a wide range of technologies, particularly social media, other communication technologies, and the ‘digitisation’ of society. He offered a diagram that he has developed as a model.

- There is a need to develop a new depth study that focuses on power and authority, politics and government, and political processes, and to include the central place of conflict in society. This should replace the Social Conformity and Nonconformity depth study, which is considered to be inferior to the other depth studies in the draft syllabus.

- Much of the draft syllabus does not meet the stated rationale and aim at the start of the document.

- The diagrams in section 8 need removal and/or substantial revision and there is a need to provide careful editing of the document for consistency of language and rigour.

- The Work and Leisure depth study should be retained, as it is relevant to students and the future of society.

- Conflict should be addressed across the syllabus, including conflict and armed conflict in the interactions of nations, cultures and groups across the globe. Conflict management should also be investigated across the syllabus.
7 Consultation meetings feedback

Consultation meetings were held with:

- the Society and Culture Reference Group
- education systems and sectors
- the Society and Culture Association
- teachers at Ballina, Liverpool and Parramatta.

Overall, the Society and Culture Reference Group was supportive of the draft syllabus while supplying suggestions across the document. Some key comments included:

- cascading of the concepts is helpful for teachers
- section 8 is too wordy and needs to be written with more accessible language – the use of dot points is suggested
- the contemporary context section, while potentially useful, needs to be better explained so that its intention for teaching and learning is clear
- the Preliminary course is quite good overall, but requires some editing and tightening
- the HSC core is improved, but the theories should be reconsidered as the requirement is too much
- the Popular Culture, the Ideologies and Belief Systems and the Social Inclusion and Exclusion depth studies are overall supported, with some amendments
- the Social Conformity and Nonconformity depth study requires substantial work to clarify the area for study, especially in the focus study, and to ensure that it is equivalent to the other depth studies; it also requires careful editing and revision of language.

The systems and sectors were supportive of the draft syllabus and supplied comment and editorial input across the document. Some key comments include:

- diagrams in section 8 need revision
- wording in research methodologies needs to be more user-friendly, with an improved layout
- contemporary context is useful but needs clarity
- access to some of the theorists is a concern
- the Preliminary course is good, but check that it has sufficient rigour
- the HSC core is improved and is more examinable
- the Popular Culture, the Ideologies and Belief Systems and the Social Inclusion and Exclusion depth studies are quite good but require some amendments
- the Social Conformity and Nonconformity depth study is too academic and uses too much jargon – the area of study is supported, but it requires considerable work, editing and adjustment of language
- the glossary is supported.
The teacher consultation meetings were supportive of the draft syllabus. Some key comments included:

- the emphasis on social and cultural literacy is appreciated
- the objectives and outcomes are appropriate
- this is an improvement on the old syllabus
- methodologies are clear and will better prepare students for the PIP and HSC
- the continuum diagram from the current syllabus is helpful to students
- the elimination of confusing aspects of methodologies is good
- the ethical section is very good
- the emphasis on communication technologies is new and interesting
- it is a challenging and high-order course
- the quality of the course has been improved
- some of the language may be overwhelming for some lower-end students
- it is good to see the inclusion of contemporary theorists
- the meso-level is good, although some other teachers do not like it for lower-ability students and some from different cultural groups
- the contemporary context is a good idea, but it is too broad and unclear in its purpose
- the contemporary context needs to be integrated into teaching
- the revised depth studies are more contemporary and reflect the continuities and changes in various levels of society
- there is general support for the removal of the *Work and Leisure* depth study; however, some teachers are concerned, as they think it is relevant for students
- there is enthusiasm expressed in relation to teaching the revised depth studies and the new depth study
- the approach to the future is now clearer and more explicit
- this syllabus is more understandable and will help young teachers
- the glossary will support teaching and learning; it is very good.

The meeting with the Society and Culture Association reinforced comments reported earlier in this report.
8 Consultation – general comments and response

Most respondents were enthusiastic about the draft syllabus – in particular, that it is contemporary, has fewer and clearer outcomes, and retains its flexibility and scope for teachers to meet student needs.

Support for the draft document was expressed by the current Chief Examiner, the current Supervisor of Marking, the Society and Culture Association, the Society and Culture Reference Group and school sector representatives. There was broad recognition that the main directions for change to the syllabus had been addressed.

Response to main issues from consultation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main issue</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The contemporary context in each topic needs to be clearer.</td>
<td>The contemporary context has been revised and made consistent in the Preliminary and HSC courses. The instructional text aims to be clearer, as it now requires ‘integration’ of the points across the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso-level society is new to the syllabus. This attracted both positive and negative comment.</td>
<td>The meso-level society is more clearly defined in the body of the syllabus and also in the glossary. A diagram has been included to assist teacher and student understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social research methodologies and research methods should be clearly differentiated, as they are not the same.</td>
<td>The social research methodologies have been amended and now differentiate between research methodologies and research methods. An explanation is provided in section 8 of the syllabus and in the glossary. The table of research methods has been clarified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagrams in section 8 need revising or removal. They are confusing, especially those for the secondary concepts and social and cultural literacy.</td>
<td>The diagrams in section 8 have all been adjusted or, in the case of the now renamed ‘additional concepts’, deleted. The diagrams for social and cultural literacy have been redrawn to provide clarity and greater accuracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wording of section 8 is at times too wordy and would benefit from the inclusion of dot points, especially in the ethical research section.</td>
<td>The wording of section 8 has been revised and now includes the use of more dot points, including in the ethical research section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Conformity and Nonconformity depth study is too demanding and uses too much jargon. The area of study is supported, but it requires considerable work, editing and adjustment of language.</td>
<td>Social Conformity and Nonconformity has been substantially revised to be more in line with the demands and level of language of the other HSC depth studies. The focus study now requires one study, and a list of possible groups for study has been provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names for the concepts need reconsideration.</td>
<td>The titles for the concepts have been changed. The ‘fundamental course concepts’ remain, but ‘secondary’ concepts are now titled ‘additional course concepts’ and the ‘associated’ concepts are now titled ‘related depth study concepts’. This provides a clearer distinction between the concepts, how they interrelate, and how they are to be integrated into the topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of the course is too demanding at times for lower-ability students.</td>
<td>The expected demands of the syllabus have been reviewed and, where appropriate, changes have been made. The language level is now more accessible for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main issue</td>
<td>Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theorists across some of the topics may be difficult and there are too many theorists and theories for study.</td>
<td>The theorists and social theories have been reduced in number. There is now choice available to teachers for a school-selected theorist in the Preliminary course. Access to the theories and theorists has been thoroughly checked to ensure that there is access to appropriate information and resources for each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the <em>Ideologies and Belief Systems</em> depth study, the concept of 'philosophy' is awkward and needs clarification.</td>
<td>The concept of ‘philosophy’ has been more clearly defined and the reference to philosophy has been reduced and at times reworded to provide more clarification. The definition for philosophy and its applicability in the syllabus are included in the glossary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The futures section in each topic needs to be reviewed.</td>
<td>The futures section in each topic has been revised and now has a more focused and consistent approach. It is maintained as ‘The near future (5 to 10 years)’, but the wording has been refined to be more accessible for students and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Work and Leisure</em> depth study from the current syllabus should be retained.</td>
<td>The <em>Work and Leisure</em> depth study has a small candidature compared to the other depth studies. Following feedback from the consultation meetings of teachers and key groups in December 2012, it was decided to replace it. The Society and Culture Reference Group supported replacing the <em>Work and Leisure</em> depth study with the addition of a new depth study. This has been undertaken and the <em>Social Conformity and Nonconformity</em> depth study has been written and consulted on with general support. It has since been revised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language of the syllabus and the lack of instructional verbs do not assist teachers in understanding the depth and breadth required.</td>
<td>The syllabus follows the style of other Stage 6 syllabuses. Instructional language has been reviewed to provide guidance; however, teachers need to decide on approaches to teaching and learning and time allocation based on the indicative time for each topic and the content required to be addressed across each topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology should be a fundamental course concept. Technology should also be studied across the syllabus, particularly social media, other communication technologies and the ‘digitisation’ of society.</td>
<td>Technology is an ‘additional course concept’ to be integrated in each topic. The ‘contemporary context’ in each topic requires students to ‘examine the impact of technologies, including communication technologies’ across the topic in an integrated way. In the current syllabus, technology was a concept that had to be addressed across the topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a new depth study that focuses on power and authority, politics and government, and political processes. Include the central place of conflict in society.</td>
<td>The development of a new depth study about power and authority, politics and government, and political processes was not supported by the Society and Culture Reference Group. Power and authority are additional course concepts to be integrated in each topic. Power and authority are investigated in a number of the topics and the nature, place and occurrence of conflict in society are also included in the syllabus.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>