



GTA NSW SUBMISSION RE THE NESA STAGE 6 DIRECTIONS PAPER

The following submission by the Geography Teachers Association of New South Wales, attempts to represent the views of 21 Councillors who are experienced Geography teachers having taught or are currently teaching Stage 6 Geography. Furthermore, the Councillors teach across Sydney, Canberra and regional centres such as Wagga Wagga and Newcastle and across all education sectors. GTANSW councillors attended many of the state-wide consultation meeting with NESA and canvassed the opinions of geography teachers, both members and non-members and across all sectors.

The submission summarises suggestions and comments for moving forward from the Draft Directions paper to the selection of a model for the development of a draft Stage 6 Syllabus.

Whilst there was no preferred model from those proposed in the directions paper there is a general consensus among Councillors on the following:

- There is still an 'awe and wonder' element missing that the Nature of Geography could be trying to address but does not do successfully. No-one was sure how to do this.
- There should be a balance between between physical and human geography. A two topic per year structure of the Australian Curriculum Geography is one way of ensuring this balance – more difficult where there are 3 topics.
- The Australian Curriculum Geography (AC-G) needs to be the reference point for a seamless transition from K-10 to senior Geography (11 & 12) with explicit links apparent in any NESA draft syllabus document. These links are not clear in the options presented in the Draft Directions Paper although there is some recognisable content from the AC-G in the proposed topics for those familiar with the AC-G.
- The AC-G was developed as a continuum of content, skills tools and concepts from K-12. A new senior Geography Syllabus for NSW should not sit in isolation from the sequence developed for the NSW K –10 Geography syllabus which was drawn from the AC-G. There must be a progression in all areas rather that repetition – this was not clear in the draft directions models but should be transparent in a Draft Syllabus based on the model adopted by NESA.
- 2 topics for Y11 (plus SGP) and 2 topics for Y12 would enable depth of coverage (too many topics and too much content within topics, particularly Urban places, was identified as an issue with the current Stage 6 Syllabus). See previous response to

the Stag 6 Review.

- If more than 2 topics are proposed for each year, the content in each should be reduced to allow students to develop deeper knowledge and understanding and give teachers time to effectively integrate of skills and tools, particularly spatial technologies and newer ICT tools, to deliver content and build general capabilities.
- The retention of Fieldwork and the Geographical Investigation (SGP) is appropriate and preferred - with updated guidance for teachers provided. Fieldwork requirements should maintain the flexibility that currently exists for teachers to choose the “when’ and ‘where’.
- The nomenclature and purpose around ‘Nature of Geography’ is confusing. It should be a holistic interdisciplinary and applied look at Geography in action through data analysis, prediction of trends and application of skills in the real world – a transferable skillset through an interdisciplinary prism. Ideally, combine ‘Geographical Investigation’ with ‘Nature of Geography’ to model the practice of Geography beyond the classroom.
- Suggestions included reducing the hours for ‘Nature of Geography’ to 10 hours from 15 hours and increasing the hours for the ‘Geographical Investigation’ from 15 hours to 20 hours OR bringing the two units together under a new name.
- Names of topics require further consideration. For example, ‘Global Transformation’, a topic liked by most councillors, can be perceived as precluding local and regional transformations, so a change to something like Geographical Transformation (remove the word ‘global’) opens up the unit and provides a clearer opportunity to reflect on a local regional and/or global component. (Note: some councillors felt that names were inconsequential, and it is the spirit of the subject that is important).
- There was some concern that hazards in three options was repetitive, given the coverage of hazards in Stage 4. Those familiar with the Australian Curriculum could see the different approach to hazards from the K-10 syllabus and pointed out that although a physical Geography topic it is impossible to avoid the human element– in the case of hazards the focus is on people and mitigation which makes Geography distinguishable from Science. The physical aspect of the topic would still be substantial.
- The Urban places topic if it is to remain should be modernised to remove ‘urban dynamics’ and the dichotomy between world and mega cities removed (this is based on 30-year-old American Literature at time of writing the previous syllabus). The Sustainable Places/Urban Places topic should include challenges facing and responses around the growth of cities as a principal planning and political concern.
- There was worthwhile discussion about how climate change might be included. Suggestions included a separate topic or component to integration into all topics where relevant. There was concern about how effectively climate change was being

taught across 7 – 10 and the implications of that for moving forward in the senior course.

- NSW teachers like to have some choice and the opportunity to choose case studies that cross local, national and global scales should remain.
- Flexibility in the delivery of topics is important but not essential, give other states mandate the order in which topics are taught in year 12.
- The purpose of objective responses in the exam was questioned - and whether the focus of such questions should be on testing skills or content. This needs to be clarified in the possible exam structure.
- The 15 multiple choice and the potential of questions to apply knowledge to stimulus material or scenarios was liked. The inclusion of a formulae sheet and list of examinable skills for the Stage 6 course was recommended.
- A lack of reference to how concepts, tools and skills would be presented in a draft syllabus document was a concern. It was felt that a table linking particular tools to topics to guide effective integration was preferable as well as the current statements within each topic (as exists in the current syllabus). An amendment to the current K-10 syllabus to include a similar table that Stage 6 could build on was also recommended.
- All councillors support efforts to create a Geography Extension Course in the future.

Lorraine Chaffer

President GTANSW

On behalf of the Geography Teachers Association of NSW